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PRISONERS OF HOPE

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EXILES OF ETERNITY

AN EXPOSITION OF DANTE'S INFERNO

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THE PVRGATORIO OF DANTE.
III. EARTHLY PARADISE.
VII. SENSVALITY.
VI. GLVTTONY.
V. AVARICE.
IV. ACCIDIA.
III. ANGER.
II. ENVY.
I. TERRACE OF PRIDE.
GATE OF S. PETER
IV. NEGLIGENT PRINCES.
III. THE ENERGETIC (VIOLENT DEATH).
II. THE INDOLENT (NATURAL DEATH).
I. THE EXCOMMUNICATE.
II. PVRGATORY PROPER.
I. ANTE-PVRGATORY.
II. THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.
I. PENITENTS OF THE LAST HOVR.

Prisoners of Hope

AN EXPOSITION OF

DANTE'S PURGATORIO

BY THE REV.

JOHN S. CARROLL, M.A.

XXVII-499

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Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.
Zech. ix. 12.

La bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
Che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.
Purg. iii. 122, 123.

TO

MY ALMA MATER

THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

'Un foco
Ch' emisperio di tenebre vincia.'

PREFACE

THIS volume follows the general plan and method of my previous book on the *Inferno*, 'Exiles of Eternity.' It is an exposition, canto by canto, with the special purpose of bringing out the ethical significance of what many Dante students regard as the most interesting, because the most human, part of the *Commedia*. I have found it a much more difficult task than the *Inferno*: probably Dante meant it to be so, in fulfilment of the words of his Guide:

> 'Facilis descensus Averno:
> Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:
> Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
> Hoc opus, hic labor est.'
>
> *Æneid*, vi. 126-129.

In the *Inferno* we see one simple law of retribution working itself out in its final inevitable issues; whereas in the *Purgatorio* we have many conflicting forces, 'mercy glorying against judgment,' the law of the mind warring against the law in the members, and no inch of self-conquest gained save at the cost of toil and agony. The difficulty of exposition is further increased by the continuous and complicated character of the symbolism, involving so many discussions of disputed points that the book has run to much greater length than I had either anticipated or desired.

While the kindly reception which has been generally given to the previous work has encouraged me to proceed with the exposition, there are two criticisms which

I have found it difficult to understand. To the first, that I was 'obsessed' with the ethical aspect of the *Inferno*, I am quite willing to plead guilty; but I submit that the chief offender is Dante himself. It is hard to understand how any one can read the *Commedia* without seeing that its supreme and absorbing interest is ethical and spiritual. It is not a side issue, a mere by-path: it is the king's highway. Dante expressly calls himself a 'poet of Righteousness' in contradistinction to others whom he names as poets of Arms and of Love; and this seems quite decisive of the leading idea and purpose of the poem. There are, of course, many other aspects and interests, but surely an expositor is scarcely to be condemned for choosing that which the poet himself regarded as the chief. 'The aim of the whole and of the part,' he writes in his Epistle to Can Grande, 'is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery, and to guide them to a state of happiness'—an aim which can be accomplished only by moral and spiritual means.

The second criticism is even more fundamental, objecting to the very existence of any such exposition. Let those interested in Dante, it is said, go straight to the original, and with the aid of a good dictionary and commentary work their way for themselves into the poet's meaning. To which I say, By all means, wherever it is possible. My hope is that some of my readers may be sufficiently interested to make this first-hand acquaintance with the original poem; by doing so, they will discover many beauties which no exposition can adequately reveal. But it is surely obvious that for the majority this is a pure counsel of perfection. If no one is to be allowed to have any acquaintance with Dante save in this way, the *Commedia* must remain what some seem anxious to keep it, a preserve of professed Dante scholars. This was certainly far from the

poet's own intention: he refused, for example, to write in Latin because that language 'would have conferred its benefit upon few, whereas verily the vernacular will be of service to many.' There is no reason against translating and expounding Dante that might not equally be urged against the translation and exposition of Scripture. I make no apology, therefore, for trying to share whatever knowledge I have of one of the greatest poems ever written with those who may have neither the time nor the means of making independent and first-hand acquaintance with it. The *Divina Commedia* is the property of all men, not the monopoly of scholars.

I have endeavoured in the footnotes to acknowledge as far as possible my obligations to other workers in the same field. The basis of the translations of the *Commedia* is Longfellow's version; but I have so frequently departed from it that it cannot be held responsible for the renderings given. In the case of Dante's other works, I have throughout consulted the translation of the *Convito* by Miss Hillard; of the *De Monarchia* by Church; and of the *Epistles* by Latham: comparing them with Dr. Wicksteed's versions of the same works in the Temple Classics. For many of the quotations from the Second Part of the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa contra Gentiles* of Aquinas, I have availed myself of Father Rickaby's translations. The *Selections from Villani's Chronicle* by Selfe and Wicksteed I have found useful for the illustration of historical references in the poem. Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary* and Vernon's *Readings on the Purgatorio* are almost indispensable; and it is difficult to acknowledge adequately what one owes to the labours of Dr. Moore. The references to Dante's works are from his Oxford edition; and it is impossible to write on the *Purgatorio* without being deeply influenced by his

Studies in Dante, especially the Second and Third Series. Dr. Moore writes with such fulness of knowledge and sanity of judgment, that I have never ventured to differ from his views without serious misgiving. All Dante students owe him a deep debt of gratitude.

I cannot close without gratefully acknowledging the aid which I received in the correction of the proofs of this volume from one friend who is now beyond the need and hearing of human thanks.

Non viv' egli ancora?
Non fiere gli occhi suoi lo dolce lome?

JOHN S. CARROLL.

Innisfail, Newlands, Glasgow,
1906.

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Quin, et supremo cum lumine vita reliquit,
Non tamen omne malum miseris, nec funditus omnes
Corporeæ excedunt pestes: penitusque necesse est
Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris.
Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum
Supplicia expendunt. Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.
Quisque suos patimur Manes: exinde per amplum
Mittimur Elysium, et pauci læta arva tenemus:
Donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe
Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit
Ætherium sensum, atque aurai simplicis ignem.

Æneid, vi. 735-747.

INTRODUCTORY

PROTESTANT readers, unable to accept a threefold division of the world to come, may be excused if they approach the *Purgatorio* with the feeling that its chief ethical interest and value must be confined to members of Dante's own Church. Fortunately it is not necessary for our present purpose to entangle ourselves in the polemics of the subject, for the simple reason that Dante assures us that the whole poem has a meaning for this world as well as for the next. In his Epistle to Can Grande he writes: 'The subject, then, of the whole work, taken according to the letter alone, is simply a consideration of the state of souls after death; for from and around this the action of the whole work turneth. But if the work is considered according to its allegorical meaning, the subject is man, liable to the reward or punishment of justice, according as through the freedom of the will he is deserving or undeserving.'[1] This allegorical or moral sense manifestly covers both worlds: as indeed is implied in the fact that Dante himself climbed the Mountain, and underwent its purifying discipline, while still clothed in 'the flesh of Adam.'[2] Nor is this a mere poetic fiction forced upon him by the exigencies of the work; on the contrary, it is in accordance with the teaching of the Church that the cleansing pain of Purgatory in another world is rendered necessary because sinners shrink from it in this. On the First Terrace, for example, one of the penitents confesses his sin of Pride, and adds:

[1] *Epis.* x. 8 (Latham's Translation).
[2] *Purg.* xi. 44.

'And here must I this burden bear for it
Till God be satisfied, *since I did not*
Among the living, here among the dead.'[1]

The meaning is clear. Since the cleansing discipline ought to be undergone here and now, we are justified in reading the *Purgatorio*, according to Dante's allegorical sense, as the process by which the soul may purify itself while still in the flesh. This, as Dean Church says, brings this division of the poem much nearer our common experience than either the *Inferno* or the *Paradiso*: 'The *Purgatorio* is a great parable of the discipline on earth of moral agents, of the variety of their failures and needs, of the variety of their remedies. We understand the behaviour of those who are undergoing their figurative processes of purification. They labour as men do who feel the influence of the Spirit of God striving with their evil tendencies and lifting them up to purer and nobler things. We understand their resignation, their thankful submission to the chastisement which is to be the annealing to strength and peace. We understand their acquiescence and faith in the justice which appoints and measures their "majestic pains." We understand the aim and purpose which sustain them, the high-hearted courage which endures, the steady hope which knows that all is well. There is nothing transcendental in all this; nothing but what experience helps us easily to imagine; nothing but what good men, always on the way to be better, have gone through on the scene of life.'[2] In short, on any theory of the future world, the struggle against the Seven Deadly Sins is not a thing which it is safe to postpone; and the process by which a great poet, a great theologian, and a great penitent like Dante believed they could be finally vanquished, ought surely to be a subject of the utmost interest to every man who knows he sins and longs for purity.

In form, plan, and situation, Dante's conception of

[1] *Purg.* xi. 70-72.
[2] Introduction to Vernon's *Readings on the Purgatorio*, p. xiii.

Purgatory stands in striking contrast to that current in his day. He departs entirely from the teaching of his master in theology, St. Thomas Aquinas. According to the great schoolman, neither Reason nor Scripture gives material for determining the place of Purgatory; but the probability is that it is divided into two parts: one, 'according to common law,' where ordinary cases are purged in an underground prison, which, though not actually in Hell, is so closely connected with it that the same fires burn in both; another, 'according to dispensation,' where special cases are punished in divers places, 'either for the instruction of the living or the relief of the dead.'[1] Speaking generally, some such conception as this prevails in the visions of Purgatory in which the Middle Ages were so prolific. Alberic, Tundal, Owain, the Monk of Evesham, Thurcill, and many others, profess to have received revelations of a dark and awful Purgatory of ice, fire, and demonic tortures, so terrifying that not unnaturally they often mistook it for a worse place.[2] This gloomy underground conception Dante deliberately set aside, lifting his Purgatory serenely into the sunlight and the blue sky in the form of a great Mountain, the highest under heaven, and the direct antipodes of Mount Calvary. This bold open-air treatment is no caprice; it is essential to his whole conception of the object to be accomplished. That object is to undo the Fall, to bring man back to the original state of natural righteousness, consisting of the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude. These *natural* virtues must be regained before the soul can pass on and up to the *supernatural* virtues, Faith, Hope, Love, without which the Beatific Vision is impossible. It is for this reason that Dante sets the Earthly Paradise, the Garden of Eden, on the lofty summit of Mount Purgatory; and the long and arduous ascent from Terrace to Terrace is simply the undoing of

[1] *Summa*, iii. App. to Suppl., *De Purgatorio*, a. 2.
[2] See *Forerunners of Dante* by Marcus Dods, chap. vi.

the Fall, the human soul climbing its painful way back to the fourfold virtue on which the natural life turns as on a hinge.

A second symbolism springs from this. These natural virtues imply society, and society in that free, ordered, and happy state which nothing but righteous government can secure. To Dante, as his *De Monarchia* shows, this meant a universal Empire under one head; and of this, the Earthly Paradise on the Mountain-top is the symbol. This in its turn was but the prelude to the Celestial Paradise; hence the great Procession of Revelation must meet the penitent soul to add the supernatural virtues to the natural, and thus prepare it for the final blessedness. It is obvious that this scheme of symbolism would be quite impossible in some dark world underground, next door to Hell, and scorched by its flames.

This, then, is the leading idea, and it lends itself easily to the carrying out of the symbolism of purification in many other directions. The origin of the Mountain itself is probably an allegory. When Satan fell on the southern side of the earth, the land there fled to the other hemisphere, and the waters rushed in to fill the vacant space. The soil displaced as he tore his way to the centre of the earth, was flung up behind him by the shock, and formed this Mountain.[1] In other words, the fall of Satan which ruined Eden, threw up, by a kind of moral recoil, a pathway of return to the lost Garden, and so far the great Adversary defeated himself. It represents perhaps that mysterious 'soul of goodness in things evil' in virtue of which even sin bears within its bosom something of its own cure. Further, the Mountain-form made it possible so to arrange upon its sides the Seven Deadly Sins as to indicate at once their relative distances from God and the order in which they must be faced and conquered. The precipices at the base, with their close tortuous clefts, are natural symbols of the strait gate and narrow way at the beginning of the new life; while the lessening of the

[1] *Inf.* xxxiv. 121-126.

pain and toil as Terrace after Terrace is won, represents the increasing ease and joy of right living which every self-conquest brings. Still further, by this open-air treatment Dante gained the aid of the healing powers of Nature, powers which grow purer and more Divine as the soul climbs higher and higher out of evil. Above all, he was able to invest the entire Mountain from base to summit with the sunshine and atmosphere of Hope, in contrast to the dark inscription of Despair above the Gate of the Inferno. The penitents are, indeed, prisoners, but 'Prisoners of Hope,' who know that in due time the long exile will be past, and they will stand, each in his appointed place, in the Eternal Fatherland. To say, as a recent commentator does,[1] that this open-air situation of Purgatory is due to the 'demands of poetic treatment' for the sake of a contrast to the gloom of the Inferno, is totally inadequate. Doubtless the poetic beauty of the work is greatly increased by this contrast; but the far deeper and truer reason is that it is inherent in Dante's entire conception of the moral ends to be accomplished and of the whole process of purification.

We come now to the moral and physical structure, which it will be well to have clearly before our minds from the outset, even at the risk of some repetition when we reach the detailed exposition. The following statement should be compared carefully with the Diagram of the Mount which faces the title-page.

The Mountain is divided into three great sections, each of which represents a distinct stage of the purgatorial discipline: Ante-Purgatory, Purgatory Proper, and the Earthly Paradise.

I. Ante-Purgatory

This division consists of the base of the Mountain, which is occupied by souls that postponed repentance till the eleventh hour. The long delay has created a semi-paralysis of will-power, which renders them

[1] *An English Commentary* by Rev. H. F. Tozer, M.A., p. 192.

morally incapable of beginning their self-purification at once. They can only starve their evil habits into weakness by abstaining from those acts which nourished them for a lifetime. Four classes are distinguished.

I. *The Excommunicate.*

Their defiance of the Church to the eleventh hour has produced in these souls a moral paralysis which detains them thirty times the period of their contumacy, setting them at the very base of the Mountain, farthest from God, and with the longest distance to climb.

II. *The Indolent.*

These are not to be confounded with the Slothful on the Fourth Terrace, who pursued goodness, but pursued it slackly. The Indolent simply ignored the claims of goodness to the end of life through sheer laziness of nature. Having died a natural death, they received the full period of repentance. Their indolence still clings round them, detaining them for the period of their life on earth.

III. *The Energetic.*

This class differs from the last in two respects: (1) they died by violence, and therefore had not the full natural period for repentance; and (2) the very activity of their earthly life was the cause of their delay. It still detains them: they move with the swiftness of shooting stars and summer lightning.

IV. *Negligent Worldly Princes.*

These are seated in a Flowery Valley, secluded from vulgar eyes—symbolic of the earthly rank and pomp for which they neglected the welfare of their souls. They are set higher up the Mountain, perhaps because the greatness of their temptations forms some palliation of their delay.

The last three classes are detained as many years as they postponed repentance, unless the period is shortened by holy prayers. Hence Ante-Purgatory is described as the place

Where time by time restores itself.[1]

[1] *Purg.* xxiii. 84.

II. Purgatory Proper.

This division occupies the rest of the Mountain, with the exception of the table-land upon the summit. The only entrance is St. Peter's Gate, guarded by an Angel-Confessor. The three steps which lead up to it represent the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance—Confession, Contrition, Satisfaction. The Gate opens only to the golden key of authority and the silver key of knowledge.

Inside the Gate the Mountain is cut into Seven Terraces, on each of which one of the Seven Deadly Sins is purged away. Since Purgatory, unlike the Inferno, deals not with acts, but simply with evil dispositions remaining in the soul, all the sins are traced to some disorderment of Love, according to the following classification:

Terrace I. Pride. Terrace II. Envy. Terrace III. Anger.	I. Love Distorted—the desire to inflict some injury on our neighbour.
Terrace IV. Accidia.	II. Love Defective—a weak, indolent desire after the good.
Terrace V. Avarice. Terrace VI. Gluttony. Terrace VII. Sensuality.	III. Love Excessive—the immoderate desire for things not positively wrong in themselves.

This classification of the Seven Deadly Sins and the discipline by which they are conquered will become clearer if we keep the following points in mind:

(1) Sins of the spirit—Pride, Envy, Anger—are set farthest down the Mountain, and sins of the flesh highest—Avarice, Gluttony, Sensuality: to indicate their relative distances from God. The central sin of Accidia, as partaking of the nature of both, is set as a transition vice between the two groups.

(2) On every Terrace, the penitents are represented as entangled in the residue of sinful habit: the Proud still need to have their haughty necks humbled; the

Envious have their eyes sewed up; the Angry are enveloped in the smoke of their own blind passion; and so on.

(3) This residue of sin is wrought out of the soul by the constant practice of good deeds—a vice by its opposite virtue.

(4) On every Terrace, a twofold subject of meditation is set before the penitents: great examples of the virtue to be won, as a 'whip' to urge them on in pursuit of it; and great examples of the vice to be crushed, as a 'bridle' to hold them back from the spiritual ruin it creates.

(5) On every Terrace save one, Accidia, a prayer is given.

(6) All up the Mount, from base to summit, the penitents are aided by the Holy Scriptures and the Hymns and Offices of the Church. When a soul is freed from any sin, it is hailed with the Beatitude of the virtue won.

(7) The entire Mountain is under the guardianship of Angels. Each Terrace has its Angelic Warder, who represents the virtue to be won upon it. In this Dante departs entirely from the usual mediæval visions of Purgatory, which are rendered hideous by the presence of foul demons as tormentors of the penitents.

(8) On every Terrace, the souls accept joyfully 'the sweet wormwood of the torments.' The only sign of perfect purity is their own desire to depart. When any soul is finally purified, the Mountain shakes, and all the spirits chant the *Gloria in excelsis* for their brother's deliverance.

(9) The function of Virgil in the *Purgatorio* requires some special notice. As the Natural Reason he was able to guide Dante through Hell, for the natural intellect and conscience know sin and its inevitable issues. When the poet enters the Christian Purgatory, however, it might be thought that he would part company with his heathen guide. But he saw no reason for doing so. He regarded Virgil as a prophet of Christianity. In his Fourth Eclogue he was believed

to have foretold the Advent of the Christ; and the passage in the Sixth of the *Æneid* quoted at the beginning of this Introduction must have seemed to Dante almost a Divine revelation of the Purgatory of the Church:

'Nay but, even when life with the last light has fled,
Not yet departeth every ill from the unhappy dead,
Nor yet are they quite quit of all the fleshly stains;
For deep within it needs must be that many a thing remains,
Long grown with the soul itself, in fashion wonderful.
Therefore are they plied with pains, and render back in full
The torments of their ancient sins. Some, hung up on high,
Are stretched out to the empty winds; some have sin's deep dye
Washed clean beneath a whirlpool vast, or by the fire out-brent.
We bear each one our ghostly weird: thereafter are we sent
Through wide Elysium, and, a few, the Happy Fields we roam.
Till the long day, the orb of Time running full circle home,
Has taken out the concrete stain, and left all pure and fair
The sense ethereal, and the fire of unpolluted air.'

Dante must have felt that the man who could thus anticipate the doctrine of the Church was not unworthy to be his guide to 'the Happy Fields' on the Mountain-top. At the same time, he recognizes that Virgil is far from being as familiar with the penitent life as with the world of the lost. At first he scarcely knows whether to turn to the right hand or to the left. Again and again he has to ask his way, and lean on the guidance of the penitents themselves. At different points, Sordello and Statius become his guides; on the summit Matelda supersedes him; and when Beatrice, symbol of Divine Revelation, descends, he suddenly vanishes before the higher wisdom.

III. The Earthly Paradise.

This final division consists of a great table-land on the summit of the Mountain, covered with a 'Divine forest,' in obvious contrast to the dark and savage wood in which Dante lost himself at the beginning of the *Commedia*. We have seen that it represents the Garden of Eden, symbol of just government.

In the midst stands a great Tree, bare of leaves and flowers—the Tree of Empire, withered up and barren through the Fall. It must be kept in mind that almost the entire symbolism of this part of the *Purgatorio* gathers round the relations between Church and Empire. The narrative passes through four principal movements.

I. The Procession of the Spirit in Revelation—the Books of Scripture with the Chariot of the Church in the centre. The Chariot is drawn by a Gryphon, representing Christ; and on the Car descends Beatrice, as the Bride, the Spirit of Revelation.

II. The Judgment of Dante. Beatrice refuses to unveil and reveal her beauty till Dante makes full confession of his unfaithfulness to her. After confession, Matelda, the Active Life, draws him through Lethe, and he forgets his sins.

III. Seven Visions of the History of Church and Empire pass before his eyes, ending with the carrying away of the Papacy to Avignon in 1305.

IV. The Final Purification of Dante. He has now learnt from Beatrice the one great lesson of the Earthly Paradise—the true, ideal relations between Church and Empire, and must pass on to the higher revelations of the Celestial Paradise. For these, one thing is necessary: the quickening of his memory of good deeds. Matelda therefore makes him drink of Eunoë, which renews his soul and prepares him to mount among the stars.

One final remark. The first impression of a Protestant reader is, perhaps, that this long purifying discipline is carried out by man's own unaided strength, independently of Divine grace. Nothing could be farther from Dante's thought. The foundation on which the whole process is even possible, is the salvation wrought out by Christ. This is implied on the Terraces and lower slopes of the Mountain in the constant use of Scripture and of the Hymns and Offices of the Church; and it becomes explicit on the summit when the great Procession of Revelation appears in the

form of the Cross, with the Chariot of the Church as its centre, drawn by Christ Himself in His twofold nature. Assuredly Dante had no idea that man has any natural ability to save himself: from first to last, he knew that 'salvation belongeth unto the Lord.'

I

THE ANTE-PURGATORY

Cantos I-VIII

Dove tempo per tempo si ristora.

C. XXIII. 84.

foco d'amor compia in un punto
Ciò che dee satisfar chi qui s'astalla.

C. VI. 38, 39.

CHAPTER I

CATO OF UTICA, GUARDIAN OF ANTE-PURGATORY

To one who has accompanied the Pilgrims through 'the dead air' of the Inferno, there is something indescribably beautiful in the opening lines of the *Purgatorio*, for no poet ever knew better than Dante how to make the landscape answer to the mood and temper of the soul, as face to face in a glass. It is the morning of Easter Sunday, and he has risen with his Lord into 'the new life.' Just such a sky, perhaps, Christ saw in the garden 'in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week':

> Sweet colour of the oriental sapphire
> That was up-gathering in the serene aspect
> Of the pure air, as far as the first circle,
> Unto mine eyes did recommence delight,
> Soon as I issued forth from the dead air
> Which had with sadness filled my eyes and breast.
> The beauteous planet which to love gives strength
> Was making all the orient to laugh,
> Veiling the Fishes that were in her escort.[1]

He has come out of 'an horror of great darkness' into a world of morning peace and hope and love. The sun is not yet risen, but all around him is 'the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'[2]

After gazing for a moment at the East, Dante turned to the right hand, the direction appropriate to the Godward life, as the left was to the lost world from which he had just escaped. The movement was probably instinctive, his eye being caught by a great constellation of four stars burning so brightly in the Southern sky

[1] *Purg.* i. 13-21.

[2] Prov. iv. 18.

that 'the heaven seemed to rejoice in their flames.' Whether Dante had ever heard of the Southern Cross or not, the symbolic meaning is obvious.[1] They are the stars of the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, the great natural virtues lost by the Fall, and to be regained only by climbing to the Mountain-top. Dante's eyes had never seen them before, for they had long ago disappeared from that 'Northern widowed site' from which he had come. None but 'the first people' had beheld them—Adam and Eve ere sin drove them from the Garden. Even now to the poet they shine only as distant ideals in the heavens; and it is not until he regains the Eden on the summit and is drawn by Matelda through the waters of Lethe, that they descend and become familiar presences on earth, encircling him with their arms and leading him to the eyes of Beatrice:

> Then forth she drew me, and all dripping brought
> Within the dance of the four beautiful,
> And each one with her arm did cover me.
> 'We here are Nymphs, and in the Heaven are stars;
> Ere Beatrice descended to the world,
> We as her handmaids were ordained to her.
> We 'll lead thee to her eyes.'[2]

Yet even from the Northern world thus widowed of the natural virtues, Dante found one on whose face the four

[1] *Purg.* i. 22-27. According to Butler, the reference is almost certainly to the Southern Cross: 'Not only may Dante have heard of it from travellers, but his own astronomical knowledge was probably sufficient to tell him that the "*settentrional sito*" had once enjoyed the sight of the four stars, which have been visible as far north as the shores of the Baltic.' Against this is the difficulty that the three stars of the theological virtues mentioned in Canto viii. 89-93 are obviously allegorical; and also, Dante expressly says these four have never been seen in the Northern hemisphere since the days of Eden.

[2] *Purg.* xxxi. 103-109. See also xxix. 130-132. The 'larger constellations burning' of the sky of Purgatory may be compared with Virgil's words about the Elysian Fields:

> Largior hic campos æther, et lumine vestit
> Purpureo: solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.
> —*Æn.* vi. 640-641.

There is, perhaps, a more exact correspondence to *The Dream of Scipio*: 'There were stars which we never saw from this place, and their magnitudes were such as we never imagined.'

stars shone with the brightness of the sun. Turning a little to the North he saw an old man with long white beard, and so venerable in his look that no father could be more worthy to receive reverence from a son.[1] It is the famous Cato of Utica, the Warder of the Mount, or rather of the Ante-Purgatory at its base, and one of the most mysterious figures in the whole poem. When the great civil war broke out in 49 B.C. between Cæsar and Pompey, Cato fought on the side of the latter. On the defeat of Scipio at the battle of Thapsus in 46, he resolved to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the conqueror and survive to witness what he regarded as the enslavement of his country. Before stabbing himself he spent the greater part of the night in reading over more than once Plato's discussion of the immortality of the soul in the *Phædo*—a dialogue, however, which strongly condemns suicide.[2] The mystery is how such a man is set here as Guardian of the Mount on which only Christian souls are purified. As an enemy of Cæsar, we might almost expect to find him in the Ninth Circle of the Inferno with Brutus and Cassius. Or, as a suicide we might look for him among the Violent against Themselves. Even if, as some hold, no pagan is punished in this class on the ground that heathen morality did not regard suicide as sinful, why, in that case, did not Dante set him in the Limbo of Virtuous Heathen, in company with Virgil and Cæsar, and his own wife Marcia? From line 90, it seems that this was actually his original place in the other world; for the words, 'when I came forth thence,' can only refer to the Limbo 'beyond the evil river,' where his

[1] In his description of him as a man of venerable age and appearance, Dante follows Lucan (*Pharsalia*, ii. 372-376). His actual age at his death was forty-nine.

[2] *Phædo*, 61, 62. Socrates argues that the philosopher 'will be willing to die, though he will not take his own life.' To this Cebes objects with the question why, 'when a man is better dead'? 'There is a doctrine,' says Socrates, 'whispered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door of his prison and run away; this is a great mystery which I do not quite understand. Yet I too believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we are a possession of theirs' (Jowett's Translation).

wife still was. We must suppose then that Cato, dying in 46 B.C., remained for about eighty years in Limbo, and that he was rescued along with the Old Testament saints when Christ 'descended into Hell,' although no hint of this is elsewhere given.[1] It shows the extraordinary reverence in which Dante held him. He accepted the view of his character taken by Cicero, Lucan, and virtually the whole world of antiquity. Virgil makes him Lawgiver to the holy dead in Elysium, and it was probably this which suggested to Dante his function here on Mount Purgatory.[2] His admiration of him runs through many passages in his prose works. In the *De Monarchia* (ii. 5), he calls him 'the severest champion of true liberty,' and says that in order to 'kindle in the world the passionate love of liberty, he showed how dear was liberty, choosing to pass out of life a free man, rather than without liberty to abide in life.' 'O most sacred heart of Cato,' he exclaims in the *Convito*, 'who will presume to speak of thee? Certainly nothing greater than silence can be said of thee'; and in another passage he rises into what seems to us an extraordinary extravagance of veneration: 'What earthly man was more worthy to symbolize God than Cato? Certainly none.'[3] His love of virtue and freedom made him in Dante's eyes the one man worthy to act as Guardian of that Mountain on which the soul, freed from the prison of the flesh, shook off the tyrannies of sin and sought 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God.' Hence Virgil commends Dante to Cato as a kindred soul:

> 'Now may it please thee to vouchsafe his coming;
> He goes in search of Liberty, which is so dear,
> As knoweth he who life for her refuses.
> Thou knowest it; since, for her, to thee not bitter
> Was death in Utica, where thou didst leave
> The vesture which at the great day will be so bright.'[4]

[1] *Inf.* iv. 55-61.

[2] Cicero's *De Officiis*, i. 31; Lucan's *Pharsalia*, ii. 380-391. The reference in Virgil is in *Æn.* viii. 670:

> Secretosque pios; his dantem jura Catonem.

[3] *Conv.* iv. 5; 28.

[4] *Purg.* i. 70-75. In contrast, it is curious to read Mommsen's con-

Look at it as we may, however, Cato remains one of the most mysterious figures in the poem, an anomaly which has never been quite satisfactorily explained. Although rescued with the Old Testament saints, he is not admitted with them to the joy of Paradise. He is not even set on a level with the souls who arrive to purify themselves in his 'seven kingdoms,' as the Seven Terraces are called. Generation after generation his doom is to see them come and pass upward to the eternal freedom, while he, as Guardian of the Mount, remains a prisoner at the foot until the Judgment Day. It is not easy to say what his doom will then be. The words, 'the vesture which at the great day will be so bright,' imply that the body which he had cast off by suicide will be restored in some glorified form. But no hint is given as to whether this involves his ascension to Paradise, to take his place there with Trajan and Rhipeus in a Diviner liberty than that for which he died on earth. It does not necessarily mean more than his return to the Limbo whence he came, to be there, perhaps, the most glorious form in the hemisphere of light within which Dante saw 'honourable people,' the great and noble souls of the ancient pagan world.[1]

A further difficulty springs from the apparently ambiguous sense in which the word liberty is used. To say that the man who flung life away for the sake of liberty is worthy to guard the Mount of Liberty, explains nothing unless 'liberty' means the same thing in the two cases. This, however, is not evident upon the surface. When, for example, in the passage quoted above Virgil commends Dante to Cato because he too is a seeker for liberty, it certainly seems that 'liberty'

temptuous characterization of Cato: 'A man of the best intentions and of rare devotedness, and yet one of the most Quixotic and one of the most cheerless phenomena in this age so abounding in political caricatures. Honourable and steadfast, earnest in purpose and in action, full of attachment to his country and to its hereditary constitution, but dull in intellect and sensuously as well as morally destitute of passion, he might certainly have made a tolerable state-accountant.' He calls him 'an unimpassioned pedant,' 'a strange caricature of his ancestor' the old Cato, walking about 'the sinful capital as a model burgess and mirror of virtue' (*History of Rome*, iv. 454, English Translation).

[1] *Inf.* iv. 67-72.

is being used with a double meaning. Cato sought liberty in the political sense—from the tyranny of Cæsar; whereas Dante was seeking moral liberty—deliverance from the tyranny of sin within the soul. The difficulty, however, is more apparent than real. We must not assume too readily that Dante drew our modern sharp line of distinction between civil and moral liberty. On the contrary, it is one of the most striking characteristics of the *Purgatorio* that these two liberties are throughout most intimately and vitally blended together. As we shall see, the great climb up the Mountain simply brings the race back to the Garden of Eden, the moral state from which it fell. This original moral state consists of the natural virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude—the four stars which Dante saw shining full on Cato's face. But it is just these natural virtues without which political freedom cannot exist; and therefore Dante identifies the Earthly Paradise on the Mountain-top with the ideal Empire—the blessedness and freedom of this present life under the government of an ideal Emperor, who takes the natural virtues for his law.[1] What Dante does then is simply this. He takes the man on whose face the four stars of the natural virtues shine with clearest light, the man who, for the sake of such an ideal of free and just government, parted with life itself, and makes him the Guardian of the Mount which must be climbed before that ideal can be reached. When Virgil therefore says that Dante was, like Cato, a seeker of liberty, he is drawing no distinction between civil and moral liberty. Dante recognized none; on the contrary, the fundamental idea of the *Purgatorio* is that only by the regaining of the natural virtues can the lost Eden be restored to the human race, the Earthly Paradise of righteous government, which secures to all men freedom and peace.[2]

At this point we come upon a very curious reference to Cato's wife, Marcia. Virgil, who comes from the

[1] *De Mon.* iii. 16.

[2] See exposition of closing Cantos, p. 373 ff.

Limbo where she is, uses her name to induce Cato to allow Dante to pass up the Seven Terraces:

> 'By us the eternal edicts are not broken:
> Since this one lives, and Minos binds not me;
> But of that circle I, where are the chaste
> Eyes of thy Marcia, who in looks still prays thee,
> O holy breast, to hold her as thine own;
> For love of her, then, incline thee unto us.
> Permit us through thy sevenfold realm to go:
> Thanks will I bear back to her on thy behalf,
> If to be mentioned there below thou deignest.'[1]

Cato's reply is that he needs no 'flattery' to persuade him: if, as Virgil had said, a 'Lady of Heaven' had sent them, no more is necessary. As to Marcia, on earth his love was so great that he granted every grace she asked; but, he says,

> 'Now that she dwells beyond the evil river,
> She can no longer move me, by that law
> Which, when I issued forth from there, was made.'[2]

It is difficult to say what law is referred to. In an article on 'Dante and Paganism,' Dr. Fearon refuses to regard this as a general law applicable to all outside of the Inferno: 'There is, so far as I am aware, no indication in the *Sacred Drama* of any general law that souls in Paradise or in Purgatory (whether outside or inside the gate) should be wholly unmoved by the influence of souls in Limbo. On the contrary, Sordello, in the eighth canto of the *Purgatory*, says that it will give joy to the spirits who are singing the compline hymn in the Flowery Valley to see Virgil (whom he knows) and Dante (whom he believes) to be denizens of Limbo. And I am therefore disposed to think that this "law" was a special condition made with Cato when he was taken from Hell on an occasion of special intervention, whether by an angel or otherwise, for the special and temporary purpose of receiving souls in Ante-Purgatory.'[3] If, on the other hand, we assume, as is

[1] *Purg.* i. 76-84. Marcia's name occurs in *Inf.* iv. 128.
[2] *Purg.* i. 88-90.
[3] *Nineteenth Century*, February 1898. Dr. Fearon holds that Cato was not rescued at the same time as the Old Testament saints (*Inf.* iv. 55-61).

commonly done, that Cato was rescued at the time of Christ's Descent into Hell, it is not easy to see what new law of this kind was then passed, unless it be that involved in our Lord's words: 'They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage': all ties of mere flesh and blood are dissolved.[1] Cato's statement that on earth he granted Marcia's every wish seems to refer to the extraordinary story as told by Lucan, to the effect that Cato yielded up his wife, with her father's sanction, to his friend Hortensius; and that on the death of Hortensius she was, at her own request, remarried to him, that she might bear 'the empty name' of wife and have *Marcia, wife of Cato* written on her tomb. Out of this story, Dante in the *Convito* weaves a most peculiar allegory, the principal point of which is that the return of Marcia to Cato late in life typifies the return of the noble soul to God in old age.[2]

We now come to a very beautiful piece of symbolism, which it is necessary to understand, because so much of the meaning of the *Purgatorio* hangs upon it. Cato commands Virgil to take Dante down to the very shore of the Mountain, 'where the wave beats it,' and there do two things: wash his face in morning dew from the stains with which his passage through Hell had defiled it; and gird him with one of the smooth pliant rushes which grew in the soft ooze. The descent to the shore is itself symbolic. The opening by which the Pilgrims had emerged from Hell was evidently a little way up the slope; but Dante must humble himself to the lowest point of penitence—no man can begin to climb who does not start from 'the miry clay.' Virgil accordingly

The office for which he was delivered—Guardian of Ante-Purgatory—was one 'for which there would be no occasion until Christians had lived and died repentant.'

[1] Luke xx. 35. In *Purg.* xix. 136-138 Dante uses this verse in a peculiar allegorical sense. Adrian v. rebukes him for kneeling to him as if he was still Pope, by reminding him of the passage *Neque nubent*—'They neither marry.' As Pope he was the Church's Spouse, but death had cancelled the marriage bond. See p. 265.

[2] *Conv.* iv. 28; Lucan, *Phars.* ii. 328-337.

leads Dante downwards across a solitary plain until they reach the shadow of the Mountain, where 'the dew fights with the sun.' There Virgil stopped and with the clear morning dew washed away the stains of the Inferno:

> Both of his hands upon the grass outspread
> In gentle manner did my Master place;
> Whence I, who was aware of his intent,
> Extended unto him my tearful cheeks:
> There did he make in me uncovered wholly
> That hue which Hell had hidden o'er in me.[1]

What then is the meaning of this symbolic act of cleansing? Doubtless Plumptre is partly right when he finds in it the danger of defilement through prolonged contemplation of evil and its punishment, although one cannot but think that he does Dante serious injustice in regard to the nature of the stains left on his face by the Inferno. 'Contact with evil, even with the righteous Nemesis that falls on evil,' he says, 'is not without its perils. The man catches something of the taint of the vices on which he looks. He is infected with the *bassa voglia*, which lingers as it listens to the revilings of the base. He becomes hard and relentless as he dwells with those who have perished in their hatred. He looks on the sufferings of the lost, not only with awe and dread, but with a Tertullian-like ferocity of exultation. He analyzes the foulness of their guilt as with the cynical realism which is dominant in modern French literature. Before the work of purification can begin, before he can prepare himself to meet the gaze of the angel-guard of Paradise, he must cleanse himself from that blackness of the pit. The eye cannot see clearly the beauty, outward or spiritual, which is to work out its restoration to humanity and holiness, until its memories of the abyss are made less keen and virulent.'[2] Whatever modicum of truth

[1] *Purg.* i. 94-136. Dr. Döllinger in his essay on 'Dante as a Prophet' points out the symbolism contained in the fact that the command comes from *Cato* and is carried out by *Virgil*: 'Before the actual penance began, natural and ethical science had had a purifying influence upon his [Dante's] soul' (*Studies in European History*, p. 91, English Translation).

[2] 'The Purgatorio of Dante': *Contemporary Review*, Sept. 1884.

there may be in this is seriously injured by the amazing exaggeration of the moral defilement contracted by Dante in his passage through the lost world. It cannot be denied, of course, that more than once he lapsed into something of the infernal spirit of the place; but to say without qualification that he looked on the sufferings of the lost 'with a Tertullian-like ferocity of exultation,' is disproved by the way in which again and again he wept when he saw their torments.[1] And indeed it is just in this weeping that we find the true reason for the washing of his face. In line 127 he says:

I extended unto him my tearful cheeks.

It is surely obvious that a man so callous as to analyze the guilt of the lost with the 'cynical realism' of modern French literature, would never have stained his cheeks with tears at all. While, therefore, there is some truth in the view that the contemplation of evil and its punishment stains the soul, Dante himself seems to lay the chief emphasis on another and less obvious effect. His tears had rendered him less fit to climb the Mountain. His very grief for the perdition of the souls of others held him back from beginning the salvation of his own. It may seem callous to say so, yet it is morally and psychologically true. Excessive grief for others makes grief for one's own sins more difficult. As Virgil on one occasion tells Dante, his tears were an impeachment of the justice of God.[2] If too long indulged in, they lead to decay of the sense of sin and of the reality of it. The feeling soon follows that the suffering is

[1] Dr. Moore seems to agree with Plumptre. In his Essay on *Dante's Attitude towards Sins* (*Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series), he discusses at considerable length the poet's ὕβρις, which 'combines,' he says, 'the inward feeling of scorn or contempt with its outward expression in the way of something like studied insult or mockery.' I am not concerned to deny the existence of such 'insult,' though I think it is much exaggerated. Dante himself, I have no doubt, regarded it as righteous indignation. On the same principles of interpretation, it is difficult to see why we should not call our Lord's denunciation of the Pharisees an example of ὕβρις. In any case, the view I take above is not affected: the mention of his 'tearful cheeks' shows that it is his sorrow for sinners which Virgil washes away—which, I suppose, will be regarded as only another case of ὕβρις and 'Tertullian-like ferocity'!

[2] *Inf.* xx. 25-30.

undeserved, and that sinners are mere victims; and when this comes, the power of true repentance departs. In short, Dante appears to have felt that his own salvation demanded the laying aside of his excess of sorrow for the lost: to wash his tear-stained cheeks was the dictate alike of Cato and Virgil, Virtue and Reason. There was a moral and psychological necessity for it, if he was ever to brace himself to climb the purifying Mount.

The reason given by Cato for this cleansing is one which runs from this onward through the whole poem:

> 'For 'twere not fitting that the eye o'ercast
> By any mist should go before the first
> Minister who is of those of Paradise.'[1]

It is the beginning of the long process of purification which ends in the Beatific Vision,—how long and gradual only a careful study of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* will show. Whether 'the first minister' is the Angel-Pilot of penitents from the mouth of the Tiber, or the Confessor who sits at St. Peter's Gate, Dante's eyes were unable to endure the brightness.[2] As he conquers sin after sin, he is indeed able to see the Angel-guardian of each Terrace, but never with clear unwavering eyes. When, on the Mountain-top, he meets Beatrice, the Heavenly Wisdom, he can see her at first only underneath a veil. His passage from Heaven to Heaven of Paradise is marked by the increasing beauty of her eyes and smile. It is not until he has reached the Empyrean, and has gained in his upward flight all virtues, natural and supernatural, that his eyes are able to bear the final vision of the Trinity; and even then it comes to him only as in a 'lofty fantasy.' This washing of his 'tearful cheeks' here on the shore of Mount Purgatory is the first act of that long and gradual purification which leads at last to the Beatific Vision which haunted the spiritual imagination of every mediæval saint.

It is not by accident that the dew is chosen as the

[1] *Purg.* i. 97-99.

[2] *Purg.* ix. 79-84.

purifying agent. It was probably suggested by the 'light dew' with which Virgil tells us the comrades of Misenus were sprinkled when they performed his funeral rites.[1] Doubtless also many a passage of Scripture must have hallowed the dew to Dante's imagination, such as, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel,' and 'Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion':[2] it would represent the cleansing power which descends direct and pure from Heaven itself. But it is impossible to doubt that with these two strands of association was intertwined a third, that of Nature as a kind of sacramental means of grace. The day has just issued 'in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning,' and 'the dew of its youth' is still upon it. In that hour before the dawn when the world seems newborn and unstained by all the wrong and outrage of the sinful day, there is something pure and virginal which rebukes whatever belongs to the night and darkness. Dante had just escaped from the dark lakes and rivers of a gloomy underworld, without sun or sky or return of day; and it might well appear to him as if the clear morning dew had power to wash away the stain and evil of it. It is one of the heaviest punishments of the lost that the great sacrament of Nature is withdrawn from them, that the very elements of wind and water, earth and fire, have become their enemies, and that, in a sense more awful than Milton's, there would nevermore return to them

> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face Divine.[3]

To emerge from this 'blind world' on to sunlit mountain

[1] *Æn.* vi. 230: Spargens rore levi. See also lines 635, 636.

[2] Hosea xiv. 5; Ps. cxxxiii. 3. Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (Bk. III. canto xii. 13) connects the dew with Hope in the Masque of Cupid:

> 'She alway smyld, and in her hand did hold
> An holy-water-sprinckle, *dipt in deowe*.'

This, however, is, as Ruskin says, 'fallacious Hope,' which vanishes like morning dew.

[3] *Par. Lost*, iii. 42-44.

slopes on which the dews of Heaven fall, is to pass into a world where Nature is still a 'ministering spirit' to 'them that shall be heirs of salvation.' It is with this conviction that Dante watches every change of the natural world: from the hour before the dawn when he sees from afar 'the trembling of the sea,' and the passing of the morning sky from white and red to orange, on to the soft pensive hour when the vesper bell 'seemeth to deplore the dying day.' That all this poetry of Nature is spiritual and sacramental becomes evident when we reach the Garden of Eden on the summit, and find Matelda gathering flowers and singing *Delectasti*[1] for very gladness of God's handiwork. For it is this same Matelda who completes the purification begun by the dew by drawing Dante through the waters of Lethe, which wash away the very memory of sin and wrong.[2] To some minds, this infusion into the descriptive passages of the *Purgatorio* of a spiritual and sacramental sense may seem to disturb and lessen their pure poetic beauty. But we must take Dante as we find him, and to a mind like his, as to Plato and the Psalmists, it was the chief joy of all the beauty of this visible world that it leads the soul of man upward to the Eternal and Uncreated Loveliness of which it is the dim and wavering shadow. It is the joy St. Francis strove to express in his *Canticle of the Sun*, in which he greets sun and moon, wind and water, fire and earth, as his brother and sister and mother, the kindred and friends of his soul.

The symbolism of the rush is much more specific. The plant is the emblem of Humility; but Cato's description of it shows that it is not Humility in a mere general sense he has in mind. He calls it a 'smooth rush,' and says:

> 'No other plant, such as doth put forth
> Foliage or hardeneth, can there have life,
> Because it yieldeth not unto the shocks.'[3]

The lack of leaves may, indeed, refer to Humility in

[1] Ps. xcii. 4; *Purg.* xxviii. 80. See p. 362-364; 382 ff.
[2] *Purg.* xxxi. 91-108. See p. 456.
[3] *Purg.* i. 95; 103-105.

a general sense—it has no pride of foliage; but the absence of hardening shows that the principal idea is, as Ruskin says, that of 'humility under chastisement.'[1] The smooth leafless rush, never hardening into woody fibre, offers no opposition to the waves, but humbly bends before their blows, and, bending, is not broken. This is the special quality of Humility which is absolutely necessary for the climbing of a Mountain where sin is purified by suffering. If a man harden his heart and, like Capaneus in Hell, refuse to bend beneath the successive waves of God's chastisement, he only binds his sins more hopelessly upon his soul, and changes chastening into judgment. His very defiance becomes his torment.[2] This willingness to accept the purifying pain—as when Cranmer thrust the 'unworthy hand' which had signed his recantations into the flame—is the spirit and temper of every soul upon the Mountain. So eager are some of the penitents to face their sufferings that they grudge the time spent in speech with Dante. Forese Donati on the Terrace of Gluttony checks himself when he uses the word pain:

> 'I say our pain, and ought to say our solace.'[3]

The souls of the Sensual, when they wish to see Dante, are careful not to step outside the purifying flames. So perfect is this willingness to suffer that no external force whatever is necessary to hold the penitents in their places—their own wills suffice; and the one and

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. p. 291 (Library Edition). Referring to the passage just quoted, Ruskin proceeds: 'It cannot but strike the reader singularly how deep and harmonious a significance runs through all these words of Dante—how every syllable of them, the more we penetrate it, becomes a seed of farther thought! For, follow up this image of the girding with the reed, under trial, and see to whose feet it will lead us. As the grass of the earth, thought of as the herb yielding seed, leads us to the place where our Lord commanded the multitude to sit down by companies upon the green grass; so the grass of the waters, thought of as sustaining itself among the waters of affliction, leads us to the place where a stem of it was put into our Lord's hand for His sceptre; and in the crown of thorns, and the rod of reed, was foreshown the everlasting truth of the Christian ages—that all glory was to be begun in suffering, and all power in humility.'

[2] *Inf.* xiv. 43-72.

[3] *Purg.* xxiii. 72. See p. 316.

only proof that a soul is fully purified and needs no further discipline, is simply its own will to depart:

> 'Of the purity the will alone makes proof,
> Which, being wholly free to change its convent,
> The soul surprises, and with will doth aid it.
> At first it wills well; but the desire suffers it not,
> Which Divine justice, over against the will,
> Sets towards the torment, as 'twas once towards the sin.'[1]

In other words, the will from the first is to see God; but the soul knows that it cannot see God until the process of purification is complete. While, therefore, its *will* is to see God, its *desire* is to endure the suffering which alone can give it power to see Him; and this desire to suffer for its sin is now as strong as formerly it was for the sin itself. As Dr. Moore points out, 'this conception of Purgatory is entirely inconsistent with the belief in any arbitrary or mechanical means of procuring release from it,' such as indulgences, transference of merits, and prayers for the dead viewed as a means of escape from the purifying pain.[2] It is equally inconsistent, we may add, with the too prevalent Protestant conception of salvation as a bare escape from suffering. The girding of the soul with the smooth and pliant rush which bends humbly under the chastening waves is no arbitrary piece of symbolism. Willingness to accept whatever corrective discipline God sees to be necessary for our moral purification is assuredly an essential element in any true conception of salvation.

This girding naturally recalls the ungirding of himself which Dante narrates in the *Inferno*. At the brink of the precipice which walls in the great Circle of Fraud, Dante at Virgil's command unloosed a cord from his waist and handed it, gathered up and coiled, to his Guide, who thereupon flung it down the abyss as a signal to Geryon, its guardian-fiend.[3] To a mind like

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 61-66. See p. 289.

[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 51. The whole section dealing with Dante's teaching on Purgatory (pp. 43-59) is of great value and ought to be carefully studied. I wish to acknowledge gratefully my obligations to it.

[3] *Inf.* xvi. 106-114. For a fuller discussion, I may perhaps be allowed to refer to my *Exiles of Eternity*, pp. 253-259.

Dante's, it is impossible that the contrast between the two actions is accidental, though the exact point of the contrast has been subject of almost endless dispute. Without entering into the question at large, it may be enough to state an interpretation which seems to have some degree of probability in it. The cord which was cast away was that of the Franciscan Order, which Dante is said to have joined as a Tertiary, that he might, to use his own words, 'take the Panther with the painted skin.' On the commonly accepted moral interpretation that the Panther represents Sensual Pleasure, the meaning is that he assumed the cord of the Order in the hope of subduing the flesh, but finding this hope disappointed he flung it away. The underlying moral idea appears to be that 'the humble halter,' as he calls the Franciscan cord,[1] is only an artificial girdle of humility of man's own invention. It is difficult to believe that Dante was not thinking of St. Paul's judgment on asceticism in Col. ii. 20-23: 'If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.' If it be objected that this interpretation is inconsistent with his eulogy of St. Francis in the *Paradiso* (xi. 28-117), it is at least in harmony with the denunciation of the Franciscan Order for its degeneracy which comes immediately after (xii. 112-126). To Francis and his first followers, the cord was the outward symbol of a genuine spiritual restraint; but to a later generation who lacked this restraint of soul, the same cord had only 'a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body,' and the state of the Order in Dante's day proved that it was 'not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.' At all events, Dante acts according to his own personal experience. The cord of

[1] *Par.* xi. 87.

an artificial and external restraint having failed 'to take the Panther with the painted skin,' he flings it away and girds himself with a natural humility of God's own bestowal—a humility, too, which can conquer not one vice only, but the entire band of the Seven Deadly Sins. For Dante has made the great discovery that sins of the flesh are neither the worst nor the most fundamental. Sins of the spirit—Pride, Envy, Anger—will be the first to meet him as he climbs; and what he needs is a girdle of true spiritual humility which will break their power at the very outset.

One point remains: the way in which the rush springs up again, new blades immediately taking the place of those that are plucked:

> There he so girt me even as Another pleased:
> O marvel! that such as was the humble plant
> He plucked, such it sprang up again
> Straightway, in the place whence he uprooted it.[1]

This is obviously imitated from the Golden Bough of Æneas, which, when torn from the tree, was quickly succeeded by another of the same metal; but Dante, of course, gives it a Christian interpretation.[2] It represents surely something more than the inexhaustibleness of Divine grace in general, ever renewing itself in response to man's need; it is rather the inexhaustibleness of the particular grace of Humility, of which the rush is the symbol. The idea appears to be that Humility is a grace never to be outgrown by the penitent soul—the Humility which accepts meekly whatever discipline of suffering God sees to be necessary for our purifying. It is the one condition of climbing the Mountain; nay, for that matter, of climbing the Ten Heavens of Paradise. For if a draught of Lethe can so remove the

[1] *Purg.* i. 133-136.

[2] *Æn.* vi. 143-144:

> Primo avulso non deficit alter
> Aureus; et simili frondescit virga metallo.

It is perhaps not an accident that while Æneas is commanded to search *on high* for his branch, Dante can find and pluck the rush only by *bending down*.

sting and memory of sin and guilt that a soul in Paradise can say:

> 'Yet here is no repenting, but we smile,
> Not at the fault, which comes not back to mind,
> But at the Power which ordered and foresaw,'[1]

nevertheless the first humility of 'the broken and the contrite heart' must remain as part of the eternal character of the redeemed. It is like the rush, the more you pluck and wear it, the more it grows.[2]

[1] *Par.* ix. 103-105.

[2] Professor Earle, laying emphasis on the green colour, regards the rush as symbolic of Hope. The growing of new shoots is 'a symbolical way of saying "Hope springs eternal in the human breast"; but with this modification, that its native soil is humility, penitence, and resignation, which are all indicated in the context' (Introduction to Dr. C. L. Shadwell's Translation of the *Purgatorio*, Part II. p. xli.).

CHAPTER II

THE ANGEL-PILOT AND HIS FREIGHT OF SOULS

In the opening lines of the Second Canto Dante tells us the time of day in his peculiar astronomic fashion: it was sunset at Jerusalem, midnight on the Ganges, and therefore sunrise on Mount Purgatory, which was the exact antipodes of Jerusalem. The hues of early dawn were deepening:

> The white and vermeil cheeks
> Of beautiful Aurora, where I was,
> By too great age were changing into orange.

The two Pilgrims were still standing beside the ocean, where Dante had just been girded with the rush, uncertain of their path upward, and pondering like men

> Who go in heart, and with the body stay.

Cato, when he sent them down to the shore, forbade them to return by the same path—the sun would show them an easier ascent. Suddenly, while they still stand in doubt, far across the waters their eyes are arrested by a strange light, coming with a marvellous swiftness, in colour red like Mars as seen through thick morning mists.[1] When Dante, after a momentary questioning glance at Virgil, looks again, he finds it has undergone a change. On each side of the central red 'a something white' appeared; and then, between these and lower down, a third whiteness came slowly into

[1] In *Conv.* ii. 14, Mars represents Music (1) because of the beauty of its relation to the other spheres, being the central one of the nine; and (2) because the kindling of its red vapours signifies the death of kings, etc. Similarly Music 'consists in relations,' and 'so draweth to itself the spirits of men . . . that they wellnigh cease from every operation'—just as in Casella's song in this Canto.

view. It turns out to be the Angel-Pilot of Purgatory, standing on the stern of his boat: the two white objects first seen are his outspread wings, the third, either his body, or, more probably, the freight of white souls beneath. Though they number 'more than a hundred,' they cannot weigh down the vessel in the water. The Angel is the celestial counterpart of Charon, the Ferryman of Hell, and, unlike him, 'he scorns human instruments' of oar or sail: his white unwearied wings suffice for the long voyage. When 'the Bird Divine' drew near the shore, Dante's eye, unable to bear the brightness, was forced to bend to the ground. The band of penitents were singing 'with one voice' Psalm cxiv.: '*In exitu Israel de Ægypto*'; when the Angel made on them the sign of the cross, they cast themselves ashore, while their Pilot returned as swiftly as he came. Dante is rejoiced to find among the new arrivals his old friend Casella, who at his request sings one of the poet's own 'songs of love' with such sweetness that the whole company forget for the moment that they have come for the more serious purpose of purifying their souls from the stains of earth. While they stand entranced, they are suddenly surprised by Cato, who administers a severe rebuke for their negligence, and scatters them toward the Mountain like a flock of startled doves.

The first point suggested by this narrative is the poet's faith in the existence of a world of angelic spirits intensely interested in the working out of human destiny. At first Virgil watched the approaching whiteness in silence;

> Then, when he clearly recognized the helmsman,
> He cried: 'Make haste, make haste, to bend the knee!
> Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands!
> Henceforward shalt thou see such officers.'[1]

Since from this point onward Dante is in constant contact with the Angels, we may take the opportunity of enquiring more particularly what was his conception of them and their function in the work of salvation.

[1] *Purg.* ii. 27-30.

To the mind of modern Christians, Angels are virtually as non-existent as elves or fairies; but to the men of the Middle Ages the spirits of the invisible world were so close that they almost saw the shining of their garments and heard the beating of their wings. Cimabue, Giotto, Fra Angelico and many others set them visibly before men's eyes, not as mere creations of imagination, but as the living Presences by whom mankind is at every moment encompassed. Their ministry to 'them that shall be heirs of salvation' does not end with the earthly life. Just as at death the souls of the wicked are met on the threshold of the other world and conducted to their doom by demons, so Angels await the souls of the righteous and lead them through every stage of purification to the final vision of God. They stand therefore in contrast to the demons of the *Inferno* who torture the lost. 'The Bird Divine' whose wings waft the boat-load of penitents 'between shores so distant' is, as we have seen, the obvious antithesis of Charon, the Ferryman of Acheron. All up the Mountain this angelic ministry surrounds the soul to protect and strengthen and guide from grace to grace. Even in the Celestial Paradise itself and in the very light of God's own countenance, this ministry is not withdrawn. In the Ninth Heaven Dante sees the Nine Orders of Angels which govern the nine spheres, wheeling in nine concentric circles of fire round a central point of intensest light—symbol of their burning love of God and joy in His service. And finally, when the snow-white Rose of the Redeemed is unfolded to his eyes, he sees the Angels like a swarm of bees ascending and descending in the heart of the flower, carrying 'peace and ardour' from rank to rank of the blessed souls. There is nothing more beautiful in the whole poem than the pictures of the Angels in this unspeakable union of perfect peace and fiery ardour in their ministry of service to the heirs of salvation: some with a quaint bright beauty as if they had stepped out of Fra Angelico's Paradise, and others with the solemn and majestic presence which Dante must have seen looking down upon

him from the mosaics of Ravenna.[1] His imagination invested them with a touch of human love by assigning to Beatrice a special symbolic association with them, as if she belonged to their number. Before her death he saw in dream a multitude of Angels carrying her soul to Heaven and singing *Hosanna*; and when his dream was fulfilled he tells us how he drew her in the form of an Angel: 'On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life, remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets.'[2] And in the Ninth Heaven it is to Beatrice he assigns the task of explaining the Nine Angelic Orders and their functions as mediators between God and the entire universe. He no more doubted their existence than he did that of Beatrice herself.[3]

In this place also we may note the symbolism of colour in relation to the Angels which runs through the poem. In early art this symbolism was carefully observed. The wings of the Seraphim, for example, are red in token of their burning, adoring love of God; while those of the Cherubim, in symbol of their rapt contemplation of God, are painted blue, the colour of the clear unclouded firmament.[4] It would be strange if Dante had not availed himself of this familiar symbolism, and the first example of it is probably the Angel-Pilot. As we saw, he appears first as a ruddy glow like Mars seen through morning mists; then, as he drew nearer, on each side of this redness the white wings grew visible. Whether the reference to Mars has any symbolic significance, it is difficult to say; but we need have less hesitation about the colours. The ruddy glow of the face may be compared with the description

[1] See Didron's *Christian Iconography*, ii. 89-91 (Bohn).

[2] *Vita Nuova*, xxiii., xxxv. (Rossetti's Translation).

[3] *Par.* xxviii., xxix. For the guardianship of Angels, compare the beautiful passage in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Bk. II. canto viii) beginning, 'And is there care in heaven?'

[4] Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, i. 47-49. 'The distinction of hue in the red and blue angels we find wholly omitted towards the end of the fifteenth century.'

of the Angels who minister to the souls of the White Rose:

> Their faces had they all of living flame.[1]

The colour represents in both cases the glow of love with which they fulfil their ministry. The whiteness of the wings is probably symbolic of the purity of heart without which such loving service is impossible; or, since they emerge from the red, the purity which springs from love alone. This symbolism of colour will meet us all through this Cantica at almost every turn.

Before passing from the subject we may clear up one slight difficulty. In bowing before the Angel Dante seems to disobey several passages of Scripture. In Col. ii. 18, St. Paul forbids the worship of angels; and twice in the Book of Revelation St. John is rebuked when he falls down before an angel in worship: 'See thou do it not.'[2] We may be certain Dante was neither ignorant of these passages nor had any intention of disobeying them. The Church carefully discriminates between worship and veneration, and Dante could not fail to preserve the distinction. The command to bow the knee comes from Virgil, the personification of Reason. Certainly if such great and holy Intelligences exist, reverence is not only the dictate of Reason, but also a necessary moral condition of being able to avail ourselves of their aid and guidance in the purifying of the soul.

We turn now to the boat-load of penitent souls wafted across the ocean by the Angel's wings:

> More than a hundred spirits sat within.
> *In exitu Israel de Ægypto*
> They chanted all together in one voice,
> With whatso of that psalm is after written.[3]

The suggestion has been made that Dante wishes to indicate the small number of the penitent as compared

[1] *Par.* xxxi. 13.

[2] Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9. Aquinas suggests that the angel declined the honour in order to show John that through Christ he was now equal to the angels (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. ciii. a. 2). 'The angel refused the homage out of respect to the honour which human nature has received from the Incarnation and to the apostolic dignity; just as a bishop might out of humility decline the homage of one whom, although inferior to himself in ecclesiastical rank, he venerated for his great virtue' (*A Catholic Dictionary* by Addis and Arnold, Article 'Angel').

[3] *Purg.* ii. 45-48.

with the crowd he saw on the banks of Acheron; but this is doubtful. Their boat-song is Psalm cxiv. which from very early times was sung by the priests as the dead were carried into the church. 'Dante may have heard it,' says Plumptre, 'at the death of father or mother, or in the Church of S. Lucia by the grave of Beatrice.' It has an additional interest because in his *Epistle to Can Grande* Dante gives his own exposition of the opening words. The *Commedia*, he says, has two principal senses —the *literal* and the *allegorical* or *mystical*, the latter being broken up into several sub-divisions. 'That this method of expounding may be more clearly set forth, we can consider it in these lines: "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion." For if we consider the *letter* alone, the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is signified; if the *allegory*, our redemption accomplished in Christ is signified; if the *moral meaning*, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified; if the *anagogical*, the departure of the sanctified soul from the bondage of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory is signified.'[1] The sense of the Psalm as sung by these spirits is the *anagogical*. The word means 'leading up,' and was applied to the method of interpretation by which the facts or types of Scripture led up to the heavenly and eternal realities of which they were the earthly symbol. The literal Sabbath, for instance, was anagogically the Sabbath of eternal rest in Heaven; and the Exodus from Egypt the symbol of the deliverance of penitent souls at death from the bondage of earth and sin to 'the liberty of the eternal glory.' Dante draws attention to the singing of the Psalm to the end, perhaps to indicate the *moral* interpretation of the last verse as the conversion of the stony heart into 'a well of water springing up unto eternal life':

> 'Which turned the rock into a pool of water,
> The flint into a fountain of waters.'

[1] *Epis.* x. 7 (Latham's Translation slightly altered). Cf. *Summa*, i. q. i. a. 10.

The new-comers now beg the poets to show them the path up the Mountain, but are told by Virgil that they are 'strangers and pilgrims' like themselves. The moral idea, of course, is that a life-time of sin unfits the soul for the great task of self-purification: even Virgil, the highest natural wisdom, cannot tell how to begin. And then suddenly the spirits crowd together and grow pale with astonishment, having noticed by his breathing that Dante is still alive. This surprise and shrinking happen so frequently that probably they have some special significance. Are they surprised, for instance, that any man repents before the last hour of life? Does their shrinking mean that the dead fear the living as the living fear the dead? It would almost seem so. Each state, embodied and disembodied, is natural to itself, but each is supernatural to the other. Again and again the spirits grow pale and shrink away from Dante because he breathes and casts a shadow. And then occurs the beautiful incident of the meeting of Dante and his old friend Casella, which shows how this instinctive fear is conquered by love. Out of the crowd of shrinking astonished ghosts, one starts forward to clasp Dante with so warm a show of affection that he is moved to return the embrace. The effort, alas, is in vain. As Æneas thrice attempted to embrace his father's shade in the Elysian Fields,[1] so three times Dante's arms returned empty to his breast. It is not altogether easy to understand why, when we remember how he was able to seize and tear out the hair of Bocca degli Abati in Antenora.[2] In Canto xxv., as we shall see, the nature of the Purgatorial body is explained by Statius, and it is evident that it is composed of much more spiritual elements than the souls of the lost; the gross material nature of the latter being probably symbolic of 'the flesh,' which is the home and stronghold of sin.[3] It is to be noticed too that the spirits in Purgatory can touch spirits from Limbo, for

[1] *Æn.* vi. 700-702. Similarly in the Eleventh of the *Odyssey*, Ulysses thrice essayed in vain to embrace his mother's shade.

[2] *Inf.* xxxii. 97.

[3] See p. 341.

Sordello is able to embrace Virgil; and also that they can touch those still in the flesh, for Matelda draws Dante through the waters of Lethe: unless, indeed, she does this only in her symbolic character of the Active Life. However this is to be explained, the meeting of Dante and Casella has the beautiful motive of showing that friendship survives the shock and estrangement of death, and forms one of the joys of the new life. Cato had just told the poets that the law which was made when he was drawn from Limbo rendered him indifferent to his wife Marcia, once so tenderly beloved. Dante may well have feared that some similar law might unfellow the living and the dead; and Casella gives him the glad assurance that no such estrangement is to be feared:

> 'Even as I loved thee
> In the mortal body, so do I love thee freed.'[1]

Little is known of his friend Casella save that he was a Florentine musician who had probably set to music some of Dante's own songs.[2] He had evidently died a considerable time before, for Dante asks him how he has so long delayed beginning the task of his purification. Casella informs him that the souls destined for Purgatory assemble at the mouth of the Tiber—doubtless to indicate the connection of their salvation with the Church of Rome—and that the Angel-Pilot, who takes of these souls whom he will, had many times denied him passage, but in no arbitrary spirit:

> 'For of a righteous will his will is made.'

This, it will be noticed, is an additional delay to that in Ante-Purgatory, and can only signify a deeper paralysis of the will. It was cut short, however, by an important event in Rome:

> 'He verily for three months past has taken
> Whoever wished to enter, with all peace.

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[1] *Purg.* ii. 88, 89.

[2] Milton in his Sonnet to Henry Lawes refers to this incident:

> 'Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
> Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
> Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.'

Whence I who now was turned to the shore
Where salt the water of the Tiber grows,
Benignantly by him was gathered in.'[1]

The reference is believed to be to the institution of the famous Jubilee in 1300, which drew vast multitudes to Rome, Dante, it is thought, among the number. 'The immense processions of pilgrims to S. Peter's,' writes Gregorovius, 'had ceased during the Crusades; the Crusades ended, the old longing re-awoke among the peoples and drew them again to the graves of the apostles. The pious impulse was fostered in no small degree by the shrewdness of the Roman priests. About the Christmas of 1299 (and with Christmas, according to the style of the Roman Curia, the year ended), crowds flocked both from the city and country to St. Peter's. A cry promising remission of sins to those who made the pilgrimage to Rome resounded throughout the world and forced it into movement. Boniface gave form and sanction to the growing impulse by promulgating the Bull of Jubilee on February 22, 1300, which promised remission of sins to all who should visit the basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul during the year.'[2] The curious thing here is that the 'three months' of which Casella speaks does not harmonize with the date on which the Bull of Jubilee was published—February 22, 1300—since it does not leave this space of time to the Easter of that year, the ideal date of the poem. The solution of the apparent discrepancy shows, as Dr. Moore points out, 'Dante's unflinching belief in the binding and loosing power committed to the Pope.' Although the above is the actual date of the Bull, Boniface '*ante*dated the privileges offered so as to take effect from the Christmas Day last preceding, *i.e.*

[1] *Purg.* ii. 98-102. Compare Charon's refusal to allow some shades to cross Styx, *Æn.* vi. 313-330.

[2] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 557. 'The pilgrimage of Italians,' continues Gregorovius, 'was to last for thirty days, that of foreigners for fifteen. The enemies of the Church were alone excluded. As such the Pope designated Frederick of Sicily, the Colonna and their adherents, and, curiously enough, all Christians who held traffic with Saracens. Boniface consequently made use of the jubilee to brand his enemies and to exclude them from the privileges of Christian grace.'

according to Roman usage from the *first day* of the year 1300, the "centesimo anno," as Dante calls it. . . . Observe that he represents the Angel's conduct [in accepting all who come] as having been affected and regulated by it from the actual period to which Boniface *ante*dated its effects. The Angel therefore conforms to its conditions *by anticipation*, about two months before it was proclaimed upon earth, because it was going to be thus antedated. It would be impossible for Dante to give a stronger proof of his belief in the absolute validity of acts of Papal authority even when exercised by a Boniface VIII., whom as a man he both hated and despised.'[1] It is to be noted too that the Indulgence avails for dead and living alike. It is difficult to understand this in view of Dante's attitude to Indulgences elsewhere. He was vividly conscious of the possibility of their abuse. In the Heaven of the Fixed Stars St. Peter protests indignantly against his head being used on the seal affixed to 'privileges venal and mendacious.'[2] Yet here Dante seems to speak of the Jubilee Indulgence as if it acted in a mechanical and *ex opere operato* manner, even though promulgated by a Pope whom elsewhere he consigns to the Inferno. The solution is probably to be sought, as Dr. Moore argues, in the direction of a more careful understanding of what Dante believed an Indulgence could accomplish. The fundamental conception of the poem from the first line to the last is that, in Scriptural language, without holiness no man shall see the Lord.[3] The vision of God from its very nature is possible only to the pure in heart. But this purity cannot be given by any mechanical arrangement whatever. It comes only by the penitent will embracing its punishment and undergoing the moral discipline by which alone sin can be expelled. There is no instance of any soul upon the Mountain being relieved of the need to undergo the process of self-purification in virtue of indulgences or prayers of others. The one thing which these can accomplish is

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, 67.
[2] *Par.* xxvii. 52-54; xxix. 118-123.
[3] Heb. xii. 14.

the hastening and ripening of the process, by producing in the penitent greater eagerness for final emancipation from sin. Take the case before us. The Jubilee Indulgence did not relieve these souls of the necessity of facing the severe task of self-purification on the Seven Terraces: it simply enabled them to begin it sooner. It shortened the period of detention at the mouth of the Tiber; but when they land on the shores of the Mountain, the whole purgatorial process lies before them precisely as it would have done had they come later. Whatever Dante's idea of Indulgences was, we are not at liberty to give it a mere mechanical interpretion which would contradict the fundamental spiritual conception of the poem as a whole.[1]

The memory of Casella's singing, 'which used to quiet all his longings,' rose up in Dante's mind so strongly that he begged for a 'song of love' of the old days, if some 'new law' had not deprived him of the power; and the musician thereupon sang so sweetly that Dante, Virgil, and the whole company stood enraptured, forgetful for the moment of their sins, the

[1] In his *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, 43-48, Dr. Moore has a very interesting discussion of Dante's attitude to the question of Indulgences. The chapter on Indulgences in Principal Lindsay's *History of the Reformation* (vol. i. 216 ff.) is of the utmost value for the understanding of the changes in the doctrine which grew up in the beginning of the thirteenth century. It seems certain that while Aquinas accepted the new conceptions (*Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. xxv. 1), Dante held to the older view. To take only one point. The original idea of Satisfaction was that of giving a proof of the genuineness of repentance, and as such it *followed* Confession and *preceded* Absolution. This is the order followed by Dante—the Satisfaction on the Seven Terraces comes immediately after his Confession, and not until it has been made is the Absolution given by Beatrice on the Mountain-top. The new theory changed this. The Absolution was given immediately after the sinner's confession, with the result that Satisfaction lost its old meaning. It was no longer the outward sign of sorrow and the necessary precedent of pardon or absolution. According to the new theory, the absolution which immediately followed confession had the effect of removing the whole guilt of the sins confessed, and with the guilt the whole of the eternal punishment due.' But a temporal punishment remained, here or in Purgatory; and the penance imposed by a priest for this temporal element became the Satisfaction. An Indulgence now meant the transference from the treasury of merits of an equivalent of this Satisfaction. It seems certain that Dante never accepted this new doctrine. There is no trace of it in his *Purgatorio*. Satisfaction is to him a thing with moral contents, and must be made by the sinner himself.

Mount, everything. Dean Plumptre finds in the incident the suggestion that a 'song of love' may carry purifying power as surely as a song of the Church: 'It is, I think, impossible not to recognize in this something more than the memory of the pleasant days of youthful friendship. There is the distinct recognition of the fact that the mysterious, religious, purifying power of music is not limited to that which we commonly call "sacred"; that a "song of love," such as *Canzone* xv., may touch that which is most essentially spiritual in us, and may stir to thoughts that lie too deep for tears. This, however,' he admits, 'stands as a solitary episode, the exception which proves the rule, and the rule was that it was not from minstrels or troubadours, Provençal or Italian, but from the singers and choristers of the Church that Dante had heard the melodies which chased away the evil phantasms of his soul.'[1] However true this may be in other connections, it is in obvious contradiction to the present context. If Dante meant to say that a 'song of love' has this purifying spiritual power, it is impossible to account for Cato's rebuke and Virgil's shame. While the crowd stand entranced by the music, 'the old man venerable' suddenly swept down upon them:

> 'What is this, ye laggard spirits?
> What negligence, what standing still is this?
> Run to the mountain to strip off the slough,
> That lets not God be manifest to you.'[2]

Since the four cardinal virtues shone full on Cato's face, we cannot fail to see in this the rebuke of natural morality, a rebuke which shames Reason itself in the person of Virgil:

> He seemed to me within himself remorseful;
> O noble conscience, and without a stain,
> How sharp a sting is trivial fault to thee![3]

Plumptre's view makes the rebuke of Virtue and the remorse of Reason alike inexplicable.

The truth is it is more than doubtful whether what

[1] *Dante*, ii. 386. '*Canzone* xv.' is the second in the *Convito*.
[2] *Purg.* ii. 120-123. [3] *Purg.* iii. 7-9.

Casella sang was meant to be understood as a 'song of love' at all, in the sense which the words suggest to our minds—an amorous ditty of minstrel or troubadour. The song is the Second Canzone in the *Convito*, which begins as follows:

> Love, who doth often with my mind converse,
> In eager longing, of my Lady fair,
> Often of her doth utter things so rare,
> That all my reason goes thereon astray.
> His speech such strains of sweetness doth rehearse,
> That my weak soul that listens and doth hear,
> Doth say, 'Ah me! for I no power do bear
> To tell what he doth of my Lady say.
> 'Tis certain it behoves I put away,
> If I would treat of what I hear of her,
> That which my mind fails utterly to reach,
> And much of clearer speech;
> For want of knowledge then would me deter.'[1]

Now, it is possible that if we had nothing but the song itself, we might understand 'Love' in the mere troubadour sense. But the third Book of the *Convito* is a long prose commentary on the poem, in which Dante expressly declares that the Lady is Philosophy, the daughter of God, and denies with some heat that his love of her is a mere 'sensuous delight.' It is a pure intellectual passion, and therefore he says it is in his *mind* Love discourses of her. Read thus in the light of the *Convito*, what Cato rebukes is the Philosophy whose sweet music once held Dante in captivity. This may seem to corroborate the view of those writers who hold that the unfaithfulness of which Beatrice convicts Dante on the Mountain-top was simply his devotion at one period of his life to Philosophy in preference to herself, the Heavenly Wisdom.[2] Without committing ourselves to this as the full explanation, it must be acknowledged that it is at least a fragment of the truth. For all his rhapsodies in the *Convito*, Dante is discovering that when it comes to the great critical work of conquering indwelling sin and climbing one's painful way back to purity, the speculations of Philo-

[1] Plumptre's *Dante*, ii. 279. [2] *Purg.* xxx., xxxi. See p. 452 ff.

sophy are not only useless and out of place, but positively injurious. Cato strikes the true keynote of the danger when he demands: 'What is this, ye laggard spirits?' Penitence and the purifying of one's soul from sin is obviously an intensely personal thing, involving the concentration of the man upon himself for the time being. Philosophy, on the other hand, by carrying the mind abroad into a world of general speculation, dissipates the sense of personal urgency and throws the soul back into the inaction of thought. Speculate about sin in general—its origin, nature, and cure—and our own individual share in it is apt to turn into a mere abstract question with no importunate demand for a solution. It is indeed a far cry from the Philosophy of Dante to that of Hamlet, yet if we take the word 'conscience' in its old sense of knowledge and reflection, the familiar passage well describes the danger, though of course from an entirely different side:

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action.[1]

The meaning, then, seems to be that Cato refuses to allow Dante to listen to the love songs of a Philosophy which used to 'quiet all his longings.'

So far from being quieted, his longings must be stirred and excited in the direction of God and goodness. The conviction of his sin must not be lulled to sleep by the old melody of the world. A Diviner music must drive the conviction home, and urge his soul on

[1] *Hamlet*, Act III. sc. 1. 'Conscience' is not to be taken here for the moral faculty. 'In this soliloquy,' as Professor Bradley says, 'Hamlet is not thinking of the duty laid upon him at all. He is debating the question of suicide. No one oppressed by the ills of life, he says, would continue to bear them if it were not for speculation about his possible fortune in another life. . . . Such speculation or reflection makes men shrink like cowards from great actions and enterprises. "Conscience" does not mean moral sense or scrupulosity, but this reflection on the *consequences* of action. It is the same thing as the "craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event" of the speech in IV. iv.' (*Shakespearean Tragedy*, 98 note).

in the great struggle: the penitential chant of the *Miserere*; the joyful benediction of the Beatitudes, as the purified heart grows worthy to receive it; and at last on the Mountain-top, when the long discipline has done its work, Matelda's song of pardon and peace: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'[1]

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 1-3.

CHAPTER III

PENITENTS OF THE LAST HOUR

I. The Excommunicate

When Cato's rebuke scattered the listening crowd toward the hill like a flock of startled doves, the two poets joined in the general flight. Dante, however, indicates plainly enough that he did not regard the fault for which they were so sharply reproved as a very serious one. Virgil hurries toward the Mountain with greater shame than the occasion calls for:

> He seemed to me within himself remorseful,
> O noble conscience, and without a stain,
> How sharp a sting is trivial fault to thee![1]

This may seem scarcely consistent with the interpretation of the 'song of love' given in last chapter. If, for instance, the pursuit of Philosophy is an element of that unfaithfulness to herself with which Beatrice charged Dante so sternly in the Earthly Paradise above, it is obvious that *she* at least did not regard it as a 'trivial fault.' Nor did Dante when he stood before her, scarce able to falter forth his grief for tears. What seems to his unpurified conscience at the foot of the Mountain a slight error, is seen at last to have been one of the fountain-heads of the Seven Deadly Sins, which he has purged away with so much pain and labour.[2]

[1] *Purg.* iii. 7-9.

[2] See p. 450 ff. The relation of Philosophy to Dante's unfaithfulness to Beatrice, however, must not be exaggerated. It is only one element, and not the most important. The 'school' referred to in xxxiii. 85-90 is not, as is commonly assumed, Philosophy in general, but, as the entire context shows, the politico-theological school which claimed 'the two governments,' temporal and spiritual, for the Papacy. Aquinas advocates it in

When in a little Virgil moderates his pace, there is something almost amusing in the characteristic words in which Dante conveys the information:

> When his feet had laid aside the haste
> Which mars the dignity of every act.[1]

Aristotle's description of the magnanimous man was certainly in his mind: 'It seems too that the high-minded man will be slow in his movements, his voice will be deep and his manner of speaking sedate; for it is not likely that a man will be in a hurry, if there are not many things that he cares for, or that he will be emphatic, if he does not regard anything as important, and these are the causes which make people speak in shrill tones and use rapid movements.' One cannot but be reminded of the great spirits of antiquity in Limbo:

> People were there with solemn eyes and slow,
> Of great authority in their countenance;
> They spake but seldom, and with gentle voices,[2]

and of Sordello on the edge of the Valley of the Princes watching the poets like a lion couchant, with eyes 'majestic and slow.'[3] The chief interest of the words, however, is that they are characteristic of Dante's own temperament. His friend and neighbour the historian Giovanni Villani describes him as 'somewhat haughty, reserved, and disdainful, after the fashion of a philosopher';[4] and haughty and reserved men almost invariably have Dante's feeling that haste mars their dignity. It is an infirmity of temperament which he outgrows. Here at the Mountain foot his personal dignity is more to him than the purifying of his soul;

his *De Regimine Principum*, but his teaching is utterly repudiated by Dante in the *De Monarchia* and the Cantos dealing with the Earthly Paradise.

[1] *Purg.* iii. 10, 11.

[2] *Inf.* iv. 112-114. Aquinas, quoting the above passage from the *Ethics* (iv. 9), says: 'It is to be remarked that rapidity of gait comes from a man having many things in view, and being in a hurry to accomplish them; whereas the magnanimous man has only great objects in view, and there are few such, and what there are require great attention; and therefore he is slow of gait' (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxxix. a. 3, English Translation). In *Inf.* ii. 44, Virgil is called 'the Magnanimous.'

[3] *Purg.* vi. 61-63. See p. 82.

[4] *Chronicle*, ix. 136.

but by the time he has climbed to the Fourth Terrace he has learnt that there is a haste without which there is no true dignity at all. The Slothful come sweeping round the Terrace in such haste that they will not stop to speak with him, and crying,

> 'Quick! Quick! that the time may not be lost
> Through little love.'[1]

In the *Paradiso* he learns that the Angelic circles wheel round God with a swiftness which is in the exact measure of their love and service.[2] In short, the dignity which counts itself marred by haste is often only another name for sloth.

As they move toward the heights, Dante tells us he was startled by noticing that while the sun threw his own shadow on the ground before him, it cast none of his companion. In terror lest he was forsaken, he turned eagerly to see if his 'Comfort' was still by his side. This is his first opportunity of noticing that Virgil cast no shadow, for the Inferno was a world of darkness in which the sun never shone. This seems to be introduced in order to follow up Cato's rebuke of Philosophy, for Virgil, in his character of Reason, uses it as a text to point out the limits of the human intellect. Dante's fear that he was deserted sprang from his ignoring the existence of such limits. His folly lay in assuming that God's creative power was confined to the one species of body with which he was familiar. Virgil's own body in which once he cast a shadow had been taken from Brundusium and now lay at Naples;[3] but God had given him another quality of

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 103. Mary's *strenuitas* (to use Bonaventura's word) in going in haste to the hill-country is the virtue set over against *acedia* in xviii. 100.

[2] *Par.* xxviii. 22-45.

[3] 'I cannot help quoting,' says Plumptre, 'a verse from the striking hymn said to have been sung at Mantua in the fifteenth century, and, it may be, earlier, in the Festival of St. Paul. St. Paul, it was said, went to Naples to visit the tomb of Virgil:—

> Ad Maronis mausoleum
> Ductus, fudit super eum,
> Pie rorem lacrymæ;
> "Quem te," inquit, "reddidissem,
> Si te vivum invenissem,
> Poetarum Maxime."'

He adds, however, that the evidence for this is hazy.

body, which no more obstructs the sunlight than the nine spheres of Heaven hinder the rays from descending from one to another. Moreover these transparent bodies are so made that they can 'suffer torments of heat and cold.'[1] But the manner of all this is intentionally hidden from us by God; and for Reason to attempt to draw aside the veil is a species of intellectual insanity:

> 'Mad is he who hopeth that our reason
> Can traverse the illimitable way
> Which one Substance in three Persons follows.
> Remain, O human race, contented at the *quia*!
> For if ye had been able to see all,
> No need was there for Mary to give birth.'[2]

In other words, the mystery of the Trinity should teach us that not less mysterious are the operations of its power. We must be content with the *quia*, the mere fact, without knowing the *how* and *why*. It is the very existence of such limits which made the Incarnation necessary. 'If God had wished man to know everything, He would not have forbidden our first parents to touch the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they had not disobeyed, the human race would not have been doomed, and there would have been no need of the Incarnation of Christ, and the Redemption of Man.'[3] In this view Dante takes his side in a famous controversy of mediæval theology, which is by no means ended yet, namely, whether there would have been an Incarnation of God had there been no Fall. St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Dante here follows, decides after much hesitation against the view of his master, Albertus Magnus. In the Third Part of the *Summa* (q. i. a. 3), he holds that Scripture always assigns sin as the cause of the Incarnation, and adds: 'Take away the diseases,

[1] Aquinas, *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxx. a. 1, 2, 3.

[2] *Purg.* iii. 34-39. In scholastic phraseology, the *quia* is equivalent to the *fact*, the thing which can be demonstrated by means of the *effect*. It is opposed to the *quid*, the thing which is demonstrated by its final *cause*. Dante's meaning is that human reason being powerless to penetrate to the essence or *quiddity*, must remain contented with the *quia*, the fact as seen in its effects.

[3] Vernon, *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 94. Compare Canto xxix. 22-30 (p. 399) for Eve's refusal 'to remain under any veil.'

take away the wounds, and there is no cause for the medicine.'[1]

Having thus pointed out the limits of Reason in Scripture, Virgil reminds Dante of their sad issues outside the sphere of Revelation:

> 'And ye have seen desiring without fruit
> Those whose desire would have been quieted,
> Which evermore is given them for a grief.
> I speak of Aristotle and of Plato,
> And of many others.' And here he bent his brow,
> And more he said not, and remained distressed.[2]

The argument is that had mere Reason been sufficient, such men would not be in the Limbo of unsatisfied desire for the knowledge of God. For they are the 'masters of those who know,' the men in whom the natural Reason rose to its highest power. In short, this passage is Reason's own confession that it is unable to 'traverse the illimitable way' of God, even in relation to the comparatively humble problems which gather round the human body in this world and the next. We may conjecture that it is Dante's rebuke of that scholastic pride of intellect which settled all questions of Heaven and Earth with one omniscient glance. On one side of his nature he was himself a scholastic, as we shall have good reason yet to know; but he was also a mystic and saw clearly the limits of mere dialectics. There is a mysteriously beautiful passage in the *Paradiso* which brings out the two elements. In the Heaven of the Sun, he finds himself surrounded as with garlands by two shining circles of Theologians, representing two distinct types of Theology—the Dominican and the Franciscan; but he tells us that, outside of both, on the far horizon, there flashed forth suddenly a third circle, the 'true sparkling of the Holy Ghost'—obviously some higher, Diviner type which his eyes were as yet unable to bear. Virgil's gentle rebuke in the passage before us is Dante's

[1] For a further discussion of this question, see p. 394.

[2] *Purg.* iii. 40-45. In *Inf.* iv. Dante sees the wisest of the Heathen in a light 'which conquers a hemisphere of darkness.' It is the hemisphere of natural Reason; the other hemisphere of Revelation is withheld. The problem of the salvation of the heathen world is one that greatly exercised Dante's mind. See *Par.* xix., xx.

first hint that this great horizon of truth exists beyond the circles of the scholastic intellect. It is his second great lesson in humility since he reached the Mountain: first, the practical humility of bending under God's chastisement like the rush before the wave; and now the intellectual humility which bends as meekly before God's mystery. The spiritual connection between the two is probably much more vital than appears upon the surface.[1]

The Pilgrims now found themselves brought up by the base of the Mountain, a precipice so steep that the most desolate and solitary path on the Riviera had been an easy stairway in comparison. Reason is quite helpless as guide: Virgil can only wonder on which side the slope may be, for nothing short of wings would avail here. As they stand in doubt, Virgil examining the path below and Dante searching the rocks above for an opening, the latter suddenly caught sight of a crowd of souls coming toward them from the left, but so slowly that they seemed not to move their feet. This is the first of the four classes of penitents who are detained in Ante-Purgatory because they lack the energy of will necessary to begin the positive work of self-purification. All they have strength for is to turn away from sin and weaken evil habits by mere abstention from them. It consists of those who died under the curse of excommunication, but at the eleventh hour repented and made their peace direct with God. The moral effects of their spiritual obstinacy and defiance of the Church, however, still cling round them, and

[1] It must be remembered, however, that the scholastic theology was based on this very contrast between what lies within the natural understanding and what lies beyond it. In the *Conv.* (iv. 15), Dante quotes a passage from the *Contra Gentiles* (i. 5), in which the pride of intellect is rebuked: 'There are many so presumptuous of their own genius that they believe they can measure all things (Aquinas, *totam divinam naturam*, the whole nature of the Godhead) with their intellect, regarding everything as true which appears so to them, and everything as false which does not so appear.' Aquinas adds: 'In order then that the human mind might be delivered from this presumption, and attain to a modest style of enquiry after truth, it was necessary for certain things to be proposed to man from God that altogether exceeded his understanding' —*i.e.* the doctrines of Faith.

reveal themselves in many ways. First, they are confined to the very base of the precipice, and therefore have the longest way to climb of any on the Mountain. In the next place, their movement is so slow that they seem not to move at all—habitual evil and obstinacy have almost destroyed all energy towards better things. Finally, they are detained here for thirty times the period of their defiance of the Church, to indicate that it takes this length of time to build up into the strength necessary for the purifying discipline, the wills ruined and broken down by years of sin and contumacy.

Virgil having no counsel in himself, turned to the slow-moving crowd for guidance, for, according to Dante, the lowest Christian penitent knows more of the new life than the highest wisdom outside the kingdom. When the Pilgrims came to about a stone-cast from them, the whole crowd suddenly flung themselves against the cliff and stood gazing 'like one who goes in doubt.' The reason seems to be that they see the strangers going in the opposite direction to themselves —to the left, instead of the right. The latter is, of course, the direction proper to Purgatory; but so little of inward guidance have these excommunicated souls that they are thrown into a panic of uncertainty whether, after all, their own movement to the right is not a mistake. Their sin and contumacy have so destroyed the inner witness of conscience that they are at the mercy of what they see others do. This seems to be at least one reason why Dante compares them to a flock of sheep. When Virgil begs the 'spirits elect' to tell him on which side the Mountain sloped, 'the head of that fortunate flock'[1] advances, and the rest follow 'like sheep,' as the saying is. The comparison is significant:

[1] According to Vernon, 'the spirits were fortunate in not having died in the wrath of God.' But perhaps Dr. Fearon's view comes nearer to Dante's use of the word: 'Spirits in purgatory are styled *fortunati*, as being creatures whose condition is not finally settled, as having still much to undergo, being subject to much uncertainty, and dependent as to the length and severity of their trials upon much that they cannot foresee or control (such as the efforts made on their behalf by the living), but never *beati*' (*Nineteenth Century*, February 1898).

As the sheep come issuing from the fold
By one, by two, by three, and the others stand
All timid, bending eye and muzzle to the earth,
And what the foremost does the others do,
Huddling themselves against her if she stop,
Simple and quiet, and the why they know not,
So moving to approach us thereupon
I saw the leader of that fortunate flock,
Modest in face and dignified in gait.[1]

The principal point of the comparison is doubtless to be found in the fact of their excommunication. Having cast off the guidance of the Church, they are like sheep without a shepherd. This is why the Church is set upon the top of the Mountain, while those who have defied her are at the very foot, the farthest away from the means of grace she is ordained to administer. But probably Dante had a secondary meaning. In their very repentance, as in their sin, many men are like sheep, following some great name like King Manfred, one of the leaders of this flock. Princes draw crowds after them for good or for evil. Many of these excommunicated souls would never have had the courage to brave the anger and curse of the Church, but for the defiance hurled at her by men like Manfred; and those who followed him in his sin now follow him in his repentance with the same sheeplike imitation. It is part of the punishment of their contumacy that they are not yet able to follow the true 'Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.'

When the front line of this flock of sheep caught sight of Dante's shadow which stretched in front of him as far as the cliff, they drew back in alarm, and those behind caught the contagion of their fear without knowing why. It is the counterpart of Dante's own fear a few minutes before: *they* are as much alarmed because he cast a shadow as *he* had been because Virgil cast none. As already pointed out, the idea seems to be that 'there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body,' and each is normal to itself.

[1] *Purg.* iii. 79-87. In *Conv.* i. 11, Dante speaks of the sheeplike way in which men follow one another without knowing why.

We saw that the souls of the Excommunicate paused in doubt when they saw the strangers going leftwards. They now recover themselves sufficiently to inform them that they must retrace their steps. And then follows a very beautiful and significant incident. As Dante was departing, one of the leaders of the flock begged him to turn and say whether he had ever seen him in the other world. The passage is long, but since it is one of the most famous in the poem, it is necessary to quote it in full in order to bring out the many points of importance it contains:

I turned me to him, and steadfastly regarded him:
Fair-haired was he and beautiful and of noble aspect;
But one of his eyebrows had a blow divided.
When with humility I had disclaimed
E'er having seen him, he said, 'Now look';
And he showed me high upon his breast a wound.
Then said he with a smile: 'I am Manfredi,
The grandson of the Emperess Costanza;
Therefore I pray thee when thou dost return,
Go to my daughter beautiful, the mother
Of Sicily's honour and of Aragon's,
And tell the truth to her, if aught else be told.
After that I had my body broken
By two mortal stabs, I yielded myself up
Weeping to Him who willingly doth pardon.
Horrible my iniquities had been;
But Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms,
That it receives whate'er turns back to it.
If the pastor of Cosenza, who to the chase
Of me was sent by Clement, had then
In God but duly read this page,
The bones of my dead body still would be
At the bridge-head near unto Benevento,
Under the safeguard of the heavy cairn.
Now the rain washes them, and the wind moves,
Beyond the Realm, almost beside the Verde,
Where he transported them with tapers quenched.
By their malediction one is not so lost
That the Eternal Love cannot return,
So long as hope has any bloom of green.
True is it that whosoe'er in contumacy dies
Of Holy Church, though he repents at last,
Must wait upon the outside of this bank
Thirtyfold for all the time that he has been
In his presumption, unless such decree

Shorter by means of righteous prayers become.
See now if thou hast power to make me joyful,
By making known unto my good Costanza
How thou hast seen me, and this ban as well,
For those on earth can much advance us here.'[1]

The speaker is Manfred, King of Apulia and Sicily, natural son of the great Emperor, Frederick II., whom men called 'stupor mundi.' Dante's description of him shows that he felt the universal fascination of the unfortunate prince. 'In the annals of that great family,' writes Dr. Moore, 'there is no name surrounded by such a halo of tragic interest—not even that of the great Frederick himself, unapproachable as he is in the loftiness of his genius and character—as that of Manfred, "il bello e biondo," whom his rough soldiers, whether Saracen or Norman, loved with almost feminine enthusiasm; whose name still lives in the traditional folk-lore of the uninstructed peasants of "the land of Manfred"; whose tragic fate has inspired one of the most touching and splendid episodes in the divine poem of Dante.'[2]

Notice, first, one or two subordinate points. It is somewhat strange to find Manfred asking Dante if he had ever seen him on earth. This was obviously impossible, since the poet was born only the year before Manfred was slain at the battle of Benevento in 1266. The meaning, whatever it is, is generally connected with the fact that at the time of his death Manfred was about thirty-five, exactly Dante's age when he climbed the Mountain. The idea seems to be, as Scartazzini says, either that Dante looked much older than he was, or that Manfred, forgetting that he had been wandering on the Mount for four-and-thirty years, mistook him for a contemporary.

It is worth while noticing also that while the purgatorial body of Manfred is too ethereal to cast a shadow, it yet retains the fair-haired beauty of the earthly

[1] *Purg.* iii. 106-145.

[2] From a review of a very interesting book, *The Land of Manfred* by Janet Ross (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1889).

form and the very wounds which struck him down in his last wild charge at Benevento. The suggestion is frequently made that Dante had in mind the fact that the wounds of our Lord were still visible in His resurrection body.[1]

It is somewhat curious, too, the way in which Manfred avoids all mention of his father, although he was his favourite son.[2] One almost expects him to say proudly: 'I am the son of the great Emperor, the Second Frederick,' instead of

> 'I am Manfred,
> The grandson of the Emperess Costanza.'

It is probably in part Dante's kindly and delicate way of quietly passing over the fact that he was not born in wedlock; but the fundamental reason is doubtless his father's general character and doom. Manfred evidently shrinks from allying himself with one who lies in a fiery tomb in the City of Dis for heresy: he may even regard this as ending the relationship. As himself on the way to Paradise, he prefers to claim kinship, natural and spiritual, with his grandmother Constance, whom Dante sets in the Heaven of the Moon.[3] Benvenuto da Imola makes a somewhat whimsical comment on the words to the effect that 'Manfred speaks as did the mule, who on being asked by the lion whose son he was, replied: "I am the grandson of the horse," although he was the son of the ass.'[4] This is a piece of flippancy, of course, but Dante takes it more seriously. Speaking in the *Convito* of the four ages of man, he

[1] Dr. Charles says the same idea is found in the Biblical conception of Shĕōl. 'Those slain with the sword bore for ever the tokens of a violent death (Ezek. xxxii. 25), as likewise those who died from grief (Gen. xlii. 38). Indeed the departed were regarded as possessing exactly the same features as marked them at the moment of death. We can appreciate, accordingly, the terrible significance of David's departing counsel to Solomon touching Joab: "Let not his hoar head go down to Shĕōl in peace" (1 K. ii. 6).'—*Encyclopædia Biblica*, 'Eschatology,' § 16.

[2] 'Manfred was the favourite son of Frederick II., and is described by the anonymous historian of his reign as "Manfredus, id est manus Frederici; Minfredus, minor Fredericius; Monfredus, mons Frederici"' (*The Land of Manfred* by Janet Ross, p. 7).

[3] *Par.* iii. 118.

[4] Quoted in Vernon's *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 115.

says Shame, as the fear of disgrace to ourselves and our kindred, is appropriate to the period of Adolescence; and he gives an instance from Statius: 'When Polynices was questioned by King Adrastus of his origin, he hesitated before speaking, for shame of the fault he had committed against his father, and further for the faults of Œdipus his father, which seemed to leave their trace in the shame of the son. And he did not mention his father, but his ancestors and his land and his mother.'[1] This almost parallel case proves that it is not by accident Manfred omits his father's name: it is connected with this sense of shame which shrinks from family dishonour.

The repentance of Manfred *in articulo mortis* is, of course, pure fiction. Falling in the rush of battle, and his body not recovered for three days, no one can have known his last thoughts. Dante's sombre imagination loved to play round the death of men and women whose life went out in mystery, until it reconstructed the final crisis and tragedy of the soul as it passed from world to world: Francesca, Ulysses, Ugolino, Count Guido of Montefeltro and his son Buonconte, will readily occur as instances. The suggestion of Manfred's repentance may have come from the well-known incident of his helmet. When he saw that the battle was lost through the treachery of the Apulian barons, he scorned the advice of his men to flee, and resolved to die upon the field. As he placed his helmet on his head, his crest, the silver eagle which was the symbol of the Empire, fell down on the saddlebow before him, and he exclaimed, '*Ecce, Signum Domini!*'[2] Dante may have welcomed this exclamation as a sign of penitence at the last hour, submission to God's will. The truth is, how-

[1] *Conv.* iv. 25 (Wicksteed's Transl.). See also Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 252.

[2] Villani's *Chronicle*, vii. 9; Gregorovius, v. 383 ff. (English Transl.). In *Inf.* xxviii. 16 Dante refers to the barons' treachery: 'At Ceperano where each Apulian was false.' Manfred posted them on the bridge of Ceperano over the Liris, but they turned traitors and allowed Charles of Anjou to cross without resistance. There was therefore no fighting at Ceperano, though Dante speaks as if there had been.

ever, that Dante was not unwilling to use Manfred and his repentance to show the limits of the Church's power to *condemn*, in precisely the same way as he had used the perdition of Guido da Montefeltro to show the limits of her power to *pardon*.[1] It may be for this reason that Manfred's wickedness is put at its full value:

'Horrible my iniquities had been.'

It is difficult to say what lies behind these words. If Villani is to be believed, Manfred put to death his brother Henry's sons in prison; had his father smothered with a bolster; and bribed the physicians to poison his brother, Conrad IV.; and he sums up his general character in the following words: 'He was beautiful in person, and, like his father, but even more, dissolute in every fashion; a musician he was, and singer, and loved to see around him buffoons and minstrels, and beautiful concubines, and was always clad in green raiment; very liberal was he, and courteous, and gracious, so that he was much loved and in great favour; but all his life he was an epicurean, caring neither for God nor the saints, but only for bodily delights. An enemy he was to Holy Church, and to priests and monks, occupying the churches as his father had done.'[2] Doubtless much of this is true, since Dante, who had a sincere admiration for him and his father as enlightened and cultured princes, appears to have believed it;[3] but Manfred is singularly fortunate if some of the charges were not made by the Church and the Guelphs to blacken the character of an excommunicated man. There certainly must have been another side to his character if, as Gregorovius says, 'the best of his contemporaries, numbers of the Guelf party themselves, saw in him the flower of perfect manhood; extolled his generous magnanimity, the gentle nobility of his manners, his fine culture, and his greatness of soul, which rarely betrayed him into a

[1] *Inf.* xxvii.

[2] Villani's *Chronicle*, vi. 46 (Selfe's Transl.). For the crimes attributed to Manfred, see vi. 22, 41, 44, 45.

[3] *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, i. 12.

mean or angry action.'[1] But, as already said, his wickedness is put at its full value in order to bring out more clearly the triumph of God's grace alike over the curse of the Church and the worst depravity of the human heart. At the last moment, struck down in the roar of battle, kingdom, life, everything lost at one blow, weeping he gave himself to God; and now he smiles to think how in that one decisive moment guilt and curse fell off him like a cloak, and Heaven was won:

> 'Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms
> That it receives whate'er turns back to it.'

It is all past: the ban, wounds, defeat, death, all the tragedy of his short, sinful, stormy life, are now but matter for a happy smile.[2]

The story of the finding of Manfred's body as told by Villani has a peculiar vividness and pathos which may justify another quotation: 'At his end, search was made for Manfred for more than three days, and he could not be found, and it was not known if he was slain, or taken, or escaped, because he had not borne royal insignia in the battle; at last he was recognized by one of his own camp-followers by sundry marks on his person, in the midst of the battle-field; and his body being found by the said camp-follower, he threw it across an ass he had and went his way crying, "Who buys Manfred? Who buys Manfred?" And one of the King's barons chastised this fellow and brought the body of Manfred before the King, who caused all the barons which had been taken prisoners to come together, and having asked each one if it was Manfred, they all timidly said Yes. When Count Giordano came, he smote his hands against his face, weeping and crying: "Alas, alas, my lord," wherefor he was commended by the French.' The hatred of the Church pursued his very

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 395 (English Translation).

[2] Manfred smiles in the act of showing Dante the fatal wound he received at Benevento:

> he said, 'Now see,'
> And showed me a wound high up upon the breast.
> Then *smiling* said, 'I am Manfred'—(iii. 110-112).

bones. As an excommunicated man he could not lie in consecrated ground. He was buried at the head of the bridge at Benevento, and each soldier of the French army threw a stone on the body in honour of his heroic spirit. By command of Clement IV., Bishop Pignatelli of Cosenza dragged the body from its resting-place, transported it 'with quenched tapers' beyond the boundaries of the Kingdom of Naples, and flung it out on the banks of the river Verde.[1] The very name of this river calls up to Manfred the whole symbolism of eternal Hope. It is usually identified with the Liris or Garigliano, which received its name of Verde, green, from the colour of its waters. It was Manfred's favourite colour in which he was always clad, and the very name of the river was a good omen that even the Church's curse was powerless to prevent the return of the Eternal Love,

'So long as Hope has any bloom of green' (verde).

The play upon the word is as if he were saying: 'Well indeed did the Church act when she chose the banks of the Verde on which to fling my bones, for its green waters are symbolic of Hope, and while Hope has one pulse of life left, the Love of God can save the worst. She may quench the tapers, but to quench the eternal grace lies beyond her power.' The name is exactly the kind of hint on which a mind like Dante's would love to fasten.[2]

Nevertheless, while Dante thus denies the power of the Church to 'bind or loose' apart from a man's moral and spiritual state,[3] he holds that persistent obstinacy and defiance of the Church carries in it its own punishment—a semi-paralysis of will which detains the soul thirty times the period of its contumacy. The idea that Dante fears he has gone too far in his opposition to the Church and now makes this compromise with its authority, does him but scant justice.[4] The true reason is to

[1] *Chronicle*, vii. 9.

[2] The way in which Despair turns the soul into stone is represented by the cry of the Furies (Remorse): 'Come Medusa, so will we make him into stone'—literally enamel, *smalto* (*Inf.* ix. 52).

[3] *De Mon.* iii. 8.

[4] Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 11.

be found in the twofold conception of the Church which he sets before us on the Mountain-top. He first causes the ideal Church to pass before us in holy procession, and then shows us the ideal sinking into a 'harlot' Church, which usurps the true Bride's place. Now, it is this corrupt and fallen Church which pronounced the decree of excommunication on these souls; and if Manfred and the rest had to deal with it and it alone, it is scarcely conceivable that Dante would have punished them with this thirtyfold detention. In the *Paradiso* (xviii. 127-130), he accuses the Papal Court of using the power of 'withholding the bread' as a mere weapon of war, and of passing decrees of excommunication in order to extort money to cancel them. If this were all, it might be a virtue rather than a sin to defy such a Church. But to Dante, rightly or wrongly, it is by no means all. In the last resort, it is not with that corrupt Church men have to do, but with the invisible ideal Church which his spiritual imagination saw moving behind it in 'the beauty of holiness.' From it came all the sacraments and means of grace which the fallen Church administered. It is a dogma of the Church itself, that no unworthiness of its ministers is able to invalidate those sacraments: 'the light of the sun, or even of a lamp,' as St. Augustine says, 'when shed abroad through foul places, contracts nothing vile thereby. And can Christ's baptism be contaminated by any one's crimes?'[1] The serious thing therefore about contumacy was that it cut the soul off from the ideal Church and its sacraments, and thereby deprived it of those Divinely ordained means of grace which Dante believed to be, not indeed absolutely essential to salvation, but among the highest aids to the living of the spiritual life. This deprivation has two pernicious and evil issues in the character. In the first place, it leaves the soul without moral guidance. These penitents are, as we saw, like sheep without a shepherd. Having no inner guidance

[1] Aquinas (*Summa*, iii. q. lxiv. a. 5) says the minister being a mere instrument his goodness or badness is of no account—a physician may cure, whether his body is well or ill, and a pipe can convey water whether it be silver or lead.

of conscience they follow one another blindly and are thrown into a panic of moral doubt when they see the two strangers moving to the left. In the second place, it creates a weakening of the will which amounts almost to paralysis. A habit of spiritual defiance nourished for years, even when the attitude of defiance is abandoned, remains in the soul as a spiritual infirmity, an inability of the will to rouse itself to the toil and discipline of self-purification.

One thing alone can shorten this thirtyfold period of detention—the prayer of righteous souls upon the earth. King Manfred begs Dante to tell his daughter, 'my good Constance,' that he is not finally lost, as his excommunication had probably led her to believe, and that her prayers can hasten his deliverance from Ante-Purgatory. The subject of prayers for the dead must be more carefully examined when we reach Canto vi. Meantime it is enough to say that Dante does not conceive of prayer for the dead as operating in any mechanical or non-spiritual manner. If the long period of delay at the base of the Mountain represents, as we have seen, the natural moral weakness produced in the soul by years of presumptuous contumacy, there is nothing arbitrary or mechanical in the idea that this infirmity of the will may be removed, in part at least, by the effectual fervent prayers of righteous men on earth. At all events, if there is, it would render equally useless our prayers for one another in this present world. 'As we are taught that we may offer intercessory prayers for our living friends that they may profit by God's dispensations of sorrow, pain, warning, or encouragement, so assuredly would Dante hold, believing vividly as he did in "the Communion of Saints," that this privilege and duty extended also to the discipline of those who have gone before, that discipline being but the continuation and the "filling up of that which is lacking" in the discipline of this life.'[1]

[1] Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 53. Comp. *Purg.* xi. 70-72.

CHAPTER IV

PENITENTS OF THE LAST HOUR

II. The Indolent, who died a Natural Death

THIS Canto begins with one of those curious and subtle psychological speculations in which Dante's mind delighted. The conversation with Manfred had so concentrated his soul on the one faculty of hearing that he was utterly oblivious of the passage of time. When the spell was broken, he was astonished to find that the sun had risen fully fifty degrees: in other words, that it was about three and a half hours after sunrise. How much of this was spent in conversation with Manfred does not appear, but enough evidently to excite his surprise. It was probably no new thing in Dante's experience, for this trance-like absorption in some one subject seems to have been a marked characteristic of his temperament. Boccaccio narrates a story of his getting a famous book one day in Siena, flinging himself down on a bench from noon to vespers, and remaining all the time so wrapt up in his reading that he did not even hear the din of a great tournament, and dances of fair ladies, and sports of youth, that were going on in that quarter of the city.[1] Equally characteristic is it of Dante to speculate on this absorption and analyze it. As in last Canto he discussed the mystery of the body, so now he ponders that of the soul. From his trance-like absorption in Manfred's conversation he argues that Plato was in error when he says that there exists within us one soul above another. The reference is to a very curious speculation in the *Timæus*. Plato holds that man is composed of

[1] See Wicksteed's *Early Lives of Dante*, p. 56.

two souls, a mortal and an immortal—the former being subdivided into two, which are located in the lower parts of the body. To quote Jowett's paraphrase: 'First, there is the immortal part which is seated in the brain, and is alone divine, and akin to the soul of the universe. This alone thinks and knows and is the ruler of the whole. Secondly, there is the higher mortal soul which, though liable to perturbations of her own, takes the side of reason against the lower appetites. The seat of this is the heart, in which courage, anger, and all the nobler affections are supposed to reside. There the veins all meet; it is their centre or house of guard whence they carry the orders of the thinking being to the extremities of his kingdom. There is also a third or appetitive soul, which receives the commands of the immortal part, not immediately but mediately, through the higher mortal nature, which reflects in the liver the admonitions and threats of the reason.'[1] Dante declares that he had in himself at this time experimental proof of the falseness of this theory. If three distinct souls existed in us, when one was absorbed, the others would be free to follow their own separate interests; whereas, he seems to say, he found that when any pain or pleasure absorbs one of our faculties, the entire soul is gathered together to that one point, that faculty is in full free activity, and the other faculty which holds the soul in unity is bound. To us this is a mere curious speculation, but to Dante it was much more. The Church had pronounced this doctrine of two souls, a mortal and an immortal, a Manichæan heresy, and Aquinas confutes the Platonic theory in his *Summa*.[2] Dante evidently wishes to range himself on the orthodox side, but bases his opinion less on authority than on his own psychological experience. This experience, indeed, is used by Aquinas, who argues that 'one operation of the soul, when it is intense, impedes another, which would in no wise happen unless the principle of actions was one in essence.'[3]

[1] Introduction to the *Timæus*, § 5.
[2] i. q. lxxvi. a. 3. See *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 58.
[3] For Dante's doctrine of the Soul, see *Conv.* iii. 2; iv. 7. Compare

From his long reverie Dante is roused by the crowd of the Excommunicate crying with one voice: 'Here is what ye ask!'—namely, the opening in the precipice which yields access to the heights. Like many others, they can point out the way which meantime they are themselves unable to take. The description of the pathway on which the Pilgrims now enter is a transparent allegory of the almost insuperable difficulty of the first step of the penitent soul toward self-purification. The cleft in the rock was narrower than the gap in a vineyard hedge which the peasant closes up with a forkful of thorns 'when the grape embrowns.' Sanleo on its craggy height among the mountains of Montefeltro, Noli on the Western Riviera, Bismantova in the Emilia—all of which had probably put Dante's climbing powers to the test—could yet be conquered by foot,

> but here a man must fly,
> I mean with the swift wings and with the plumes
> Of great desire.[1]

The rock pressed them on each side, and the toil of both hands and feet was needed. When at last they emerge on a ridge on the open hillside, and Dante wonders which way to take, the only advice Virgil can give is to hold the ground he has gained:

> 'No step of thine descend;
> Still up the mount behind me win thy way,
> Till some wise escort shall appear to us.'[2]

Butler's learned note on the present passage, *The Purgatory of Dante*, p. 47. Mr. Tozer's note on ll. 1-4 may be quoted: 'The difference which is here intended to be made between *potenza* and *virtù* is more fully drawn out by Dante in *Conv.* iii. 2, where he distinguished between the three *faculties* of the soul (*potenze*, ll. 85, 86)—viz. Life, Sensation, and Reason—and these same faculties in activity, or *energies* (*virtù*, ll. 122, 123). These terms correspond respectively to the δύναμις and ἐνέργεια of Aristotle.' For the power of pleasure and pain to destroy certain faculties of action, see Aristotle's *Ethics*, x. 5.

[1] *Purg.* iv. 27-29. In Dante's day Bismantova was strongly fortified. 'Nothing now remains but a huge sheer semicircular rock, known as "La Pietra di Bismantova." Benvenuto describes it as having had a sort of plateau at the summit, which at times seems to have been cultivated. He says it could only be approached by a single tortuous pathway, which became very steep towards the top. To his fancy the mountain presented a striking resemblance in many particulars to the Mt. of Purgatory' (Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*).

[2] *Purg.* iv. 37-39.

As Dante gazes up at the vast Mountain whose summit is far beyond his sight, and marks that the slope is much more than forty-five degrees, his heart almost fails. He begs Virgil to wait for him, else he will be left alone. His Guide urges him to make one more effort, and by straining every nerve he finally reached a ridge which circled the entire hill. As already said, this narrative is an obvious allegory of the soreness of the struggle at the beginning of the new life: the strait gate, the narrow way, the precipitous path, the panting breathless climb, the loneliness and uncertainty of the road. In the absence of 'some wise escort,' the only thing to do is to follow Virgil, the dictates of Reason, which says that no downward step must be taken. This is the only guidance and encouragement possible at that stage: in this first hour of the struggle, the aids of Scripture, Angels, fellow-penitents, are all absent, but it is at least reasonable to hold one's ground, to retreat not a single step. It was not much, but it 'gave him hope and made a light for him.'[1]

Flinging themselves down on the ledge panting and fatigued, they turn their eyes to the East from which they had climbed,

> For to look back is wont to give men cheer.[2]

At first glance, this seems to contradict the Apostolic injunction to 'forget the things that are behind'; but in reality Dante looks in another direction which is of even greater importance:

> To the low shores mine eyes I first directed,
> Then to the sun uplifted them.

At the outset of the new life it is an encouragement to look down to the lower levels from which we have climbed—it is an assurance that the struggle has not been in vain. But the downward glance may harm us unless it is accompanied by the upward look to the sun, the image of God, and the ideal of the Divine life which shines far above us. If the glance 'to the low shores'

[1] *Purg.* iv. 30.

[2] *Purg.* iv. 54. An echo, as Plumptre says, of the '*meminisse juvabit*' of *Æn.* i. 203.

tells Dante that *something* is accomplished, the lifting of his eyes reminds him that it is the merest fragment of the great journey back to God.

As they thus sit facing the East, Dante notices to his great surprise that the sun is on his left hand, whereas he was accustomed in this position to see it on his right. Virgil gives him a long astronomical explanation, the substance of which is that they are now in the Southern Hemisphere, at the exact antipodes of Jerusalem; and that being on the other side of the Equator, the sun is of necessity on his other hand. If this has any symbolic significance, which is doubtful, it must be connected with the left hand, which represents the dark, sinful side of human life. When the soul has climbed even a little way out of its sin, that sin becomes clearer to it—the Divine light shines upon the left hand, revealing how great is the evil that remains. It may, however, be nothing more than one of the many instances of Dante's love of astronomical studies.[1]

Turning now his eyes up the hillside, Dante asks how far it rises; and in reply Virgil explains the law of the climbing of the Mountain:

> 'This Mount is such, that ever
> At the beginning down below 'tis toilsome,
> And the more a man goes up the less it pains.
> Therefore when it shall seem to thee so pleasant
> That the going up becomes to thee as easy
> As going down the current in a boat,
> Then at this pathway's ending shalt thou be;
> There to repose thy panting breath expect.
> No more I answer, and this I know for true.'[2]

In other words, Reason knows two things without the aid of any higher Wisdom. First, that the worst is past, according to the saying, *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*; the further a man perseveres in the better life the easier it grows: just as, conversely, in the Inferno the path becomes harder and more precipitous

[1] *Purg.* iv. 61-84. The suggestion about the meaning of the sun revealing the left or sinful side may be regarded as one of those over-subtleties into which commentators are apt to fall; but we have undoubtedly the same idea in the reflection of Dante's 'left flank' in Lethe in Canto xxix. 67-69. See p. 402.

[2] *Purg.* iv. 88-96.

the deeper one descends. And second, the sign of final purification is no outward one; it is simply the inner sense of ease and freedom in doing right. By the time Dante has reached the summit, even the admonitions of Reason are no longer needed: Virgil withdraws, because the purified will has grown so 'free, upright, and healthy' that it has become to itself a royal law of liberty, doing right, not by the struggle of discipline and argument, but by its own instinctive vision and power.[1]

At this point, they are suddenly startled by a mocking voice to the left:

> 'Peradventure
> Thou wilt have need ere that of sitting down'—[2]

that is, referring to Virgil's last words, before Dante will find it as easy to climb as for a boat to float down stream. Turning in the direction of the voice, they discovered a group of souls lying in the shadow of a great rock which they had not previously noticed. Dante drew Virgil's attention to one in particular who was sitting with his face between his knees in true Italian *dolce far niente* fashion, 'more careless than if Sloth were his sister.' Whereupon the lazy soul, lifting its face just above the thigh, glanced curiously at them sideways and said: 'Now go up thou who art strong'—a sarcastic reference probably to Dante's panting breath which still oppressed him. Something in his voice and manner revealed his identity, and Dante hastened forward to greet his old Florentine friend Belacqua, who is said to have been a maker of musical instruments. Scarcely raising his head, however, this brother of Sloth returns his salutation with a mocking question:

> 'Hast thou seen clearly how the sun
> O'er thy left shoulder drives his chariot?'[3]

It is the contempt of a lazy man who cannot understand why one should trouble his head with vain and useless questions; probably, indeed, it is a reminiscence

[1] *Purg.* xxvii, 139-142, p. 369. [2] *Purg.* iv. 98, 99. [3] *Purg.* iv 103-120.

of many a sarcasm he was wont to level at Dante's insatiable curiosity concerning the heavenly bodies. The poet cannot restrain a smile, so vividly do the attitude and the short sarcastic words recall the man he knew on earth. He was relieved to find him here: 'Belacqua, henceforth I grieve not for thee.' But why, he asks, is he lingering here? Is he waiting for an escort? Or is it simply his old habit of sloth? Belacqua's reply is the common one of lazy men—'what's the use?'—

> 'Brother, what avails it to go up?
> Since the Bird of God who sits up at the gate
> To the torments would not let me go.
> First must the heaven circle round me
> Outside of it, so long as in my life it did,
> Because I postponed the good sighs to the end:
> Unless ere that prayer give me help
> Which rises from a heart that lives in grace;
> What profits other that in heaven is heard not?'[1]

It is, indeed, the old man as Dante knew him, unchanged by death. The sloth which paralyzed his soul on earth continues to paralyze it in exact proportion as it had been indulged, year for year. Dante knew it would be many a day before these souls taking their *siesta* in the shadow of the rock would join in the eager running of the spirits on the Fourth Terrace, who would not stop to speak with him lest it should delay their purifying by a few minutes.[2] If, as is probable, Dante felt any temptation after his fatiguing climb to cast himself down in the shadow beside his friend, Virgil has no intention of permitting him. He cuts the conversation short by reminding him that the night is coming: already her foot covers Morocco. In Purgatory it is midday; but Virgil mentions the approach of night, because of the law of the Mountain that no man can take one upward step when the darkness falls.[3]

It is perhaps worth while interrupting the narrative to look for a moment at the fact that the two men who have detained or sought to detain Dante are connected with music. Casella was a musician, and Belacqua a

[1] *Purg.* iv. 127-135. [2] *Purg.* xviii. 113-117. [3] *Purg.* vii. 49-60.

maker of musical instruments. In another writer this might be an accident, but with Dante one cannot help suspecting some intentional connection. It almost seems as if he was conscious that music of a certain kind was a danger to his spiritual life, producing an enervation of soul which unfitted him for the strenuous task of self-discipline. 'In his youth,' says Boccaccio, 'he took the greatest delight in music and song; and with all the best singers and musicians of those times he was in friendship and familiarity; and many a poem was he drawn on by this delight to compose, which he then caused to be clothed in pleasing and commanding melody by these his friends.'[1] We must remember that this very question of the moral influence of music was much discussed by many writers with whom Dante was familiar: Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas. The *Republic* of Plato, if we could suppose that he knew it, contains a passage on the enervating power of certain forms of music which might have been in his mind: 'When a man allows music to play and pour over his soul through the funnel of his ears those sweet and soft and melancholy airs of which we were just now speaking, and his whole life is passed in warbling and the delights of song; in the first stage of the process the passion or spirit which is in him is tempered like iron, and made useful, instead of brittle and useless. But, if he carries on the softening process, in the next stage he begins to melt and waste, until he has wasted away his spirit and cut out the sinews of his soul; and he makes a feeble warrior.'[2] St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, with which Dante was familiar, devotes a chapter to the 'pleasures of the ear,' thanking God that He had set him at liberty from their entanglements. He confesses that even yet when the sacred music of the Church is chanted, he is sometimes 'more touched by the singing than by what is sung': 'The gratification of my flesh, which ought not to be allowed to enervate the soul, oftentimes beguiles me, while the sense does not so wait upon reason as to follow it

[1] Wicksteed's *Early Lives of Dante*, p. 55. [2] Book iii. 411.

patiently; but having gained admission merely for its own sake, it strives to forerun it and to take the lead. Thus in these things I sin unconsciously, and afterwards I am conscious of it.'[1] Aquinas discusses the question at length, and points out the same danger of the mere sensuous delight in music. In view of all this, it can scarcely be by accident that the two men who detain Dante at the beginning of the new life represent music in its two forms of voice and instrument. He seems to have been conscious that while music, as Augustine says, 'raises the weaker mind to an affection of piety,' it yet contains a sensuous element which threatened to draw away the forces of his soul from the struggle against evil which here confronted it.

As the Pilgrims turn away to resume their journey, a curious incident occurs. One of the souls startles his lazy comrades into looking up by a cry that Dante casts a shadow and acts as one alive. Turning, Dante finds them all gazing at him and his shadow in amazement, and for this pause Virgil administers a sharp rebuke:

> 'Why is thy mind so much entangled,'
> The Master said, 'that thou thy pace dost slacken?
> What matters it to thee what there is whispered?
> Come behind me, and let the people talk.
> Stand as a steadfast tower, that never shakes
> Its summit for the blowing of the winds;
> For ever the man in whom thought wells up
> Over thought, removes from him the mark,
> Because the onset of the one dissolves the other.'[2]

Dante, with the colour 'which sometimes makes a man worthy of pardon,' can only answer humbly, 'I come.' It is the second time he has had cause to be ashamed during the few hours he has been in Purgatory, though on the former occasion Virgil himself was a sharer in the blame.

It is not easy to decide what precisely the fault is. Plumptre, for example, sees in it 'two elements of the poet's nature: (1) an almost morbid sensitiveness to the

[1] Bk. x. 33. See also ix. 7.

[2] *Purg.* v. 10-18.

criticism of others on what seems to them strange or startling in his acts or words; (2) the scorn of that criticism to which his higher nature, impersonated in Virgil, leads him.' This, however, goes on the assumption that the criticism here is adverse; and of this there is no sign. Taking the incident as it stands, it was not his vanity that was wounded, but his pride that was flattered, and that in a very peculiar way. The thing which astonished these laggard souls was not simply that a man who cast a shadow should visit the disembodied world; but rather that he should repent while still alive. They themselves had been utterly unable to part with sin till they were parting with life; and it is matter of amazement to see a man who can pause and make the great impossible surrender in midtime of his days. In short, Dante confesses that in the presence of these laggards he was attacked by the subtle temptation to be proud of his unique virtue in repenting so early:

> I saw them gazing in astonishment
> At me alone, me alone, and the broken light.[1]

Mark the repetition: 'me alone, me alone'—the only man they had ever seen who had repented before the end. Virgil rebukes this spiritual pride on two grounds. In the first place, it is a turning away from Reason: 'Come behind me, and let the people talk.' It is an irrational thing to be proud of one's repentance: no matter how early it come, it is all too late. In the second place, it is a great hindrance in 'pressing toward the mark': when a man begins to be proud of his repentance, the repentance itself comes to a standstill, for the simple reason that Pride, as St. Gregory says, is 'the queen and mother of all the vices.'

[1] *Purg.* v. 8-9.

CHAPTER V

PENITENTS OF THE LAST HOUR

III. The Active, who died by Violence

THE two Pilgrims now encounter another crowd of souls who turn out to be the third class of Penitents of the Last Hour. They are distinguished from the preceding class by the fact that they all died by violence, and therefore had not received the full natural period for repentance. For this reason, probably, they seem to be placed slightly higher up the Mountain side. They come across the slope of the hill, in two bands apparently, for they are singing the *Miserere* in alternate verses.[1] Like the Indolent they are amazed that the sunlight cannot pass through Dante's body, and their chant suddenly breaks away in a long hoarse cry of 'Oh!' Two of their number then come running toward them demanding to know their condition; and when Virgil tells them Dante is still in the flesh and that it may profit them to give him honour, they return to their companions more swiftly than falling stars or summer lightning. Whereupon in a moment the whole band wheeled and swept down on them like a troop of horse with loosened rein. Virgil, who evidently thinks Dante has wasted enough time with the Indolent, enjoins him not to stop, but to pursue his journey and listen as he goes.

It is obvious that the swift motion of these spirits is not accidental. It is in intentional contrast to the inertness of the lazy crowd they had just left lying under the shadow of the rock. Dante wishes to indicate

[1] *Purg.* v. 24; Ps. li.

here another and very different cause of late repentance. It is a commonplace that sloth is one cause; but it is not so easy to recognize that an equal cause is activity. Many of these souls who died by violence were soldiers and men of affairs, and therefore of active, energetic habits—no Belacquas with their heads between their knees. In the *Convito* (i. 1) the two causes are named together—indolence and activity; the latter being described as 'that family and civic care which rightly engages to itself the greater number of men, so that they cannot abide in leisure of speculation.' Dante did not regard it as a wrong thing in itself; but its danger was that it might sweep the affairs of a man's own soul almost completely into the background. The meaning is virtually that of the parable which tells of men too busy to accept God's invitation—one with his family, another with his oxen, a third with his piece of ground.[1] The round of active life which on earth delayed the repentance of these souls to the eleventh hour remains as an entangling habit, and for an equal period deprives them of the power to begin the purifying discipline.

Just as in the Excommunicate Dante saw that the grace of God is not bound by the Church's curse, so in this third class of tardy penitents he declares that it is not dependent on her absolution. Sudden and violent death startled them out of all their busy schemes and work; and the long-neglected need for repentance broke upon them in that last wild hour, urgent, importunate, not to be put by. But neither the shortness of the time nor the absence of priests must be allowed to frustrate their salvation. 'The leaning of the poet to the larger hope,' writes Plumptre, 'appears in the prominence given to the power of penitence, even *in articulo mortis*, with no priestly absolution, no recorded confession, under least favourable conditions, to win the pardoning grace of God. He would have taught, as Latimer and Pusey did, that there was time for that repentance between the uplifting of the headsman's axe and the fatal stroke'; or, as it is in the well-known couplet:

[1] Luke xiv. 16-24.

Between the stirrup and the ground,
I mercy asked; I mercy found.[1]

The moral significance and reality of this repentance are brought out by one word which must be carefully emphasized. Their own account of their end is as follows:

'We were all once slain by violence,
And sinners even up to the last hour;
Then did a light from heaven make us wise,
So that, both penitent and pardoning, forth
From life we issued reconciled to God,
Who with desire to see Himself doth pierce our hearts.'[2]

The one word here which must on no account be overlooked is 'pardoning.' Its force lies in the fact that the speakers died by violence. In harmony with the petition, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' their own pardon depended on their willingness to pardon their very murderers. Without this supreme act of grace to others, they could not receive the grace of God for themselves. It is, in short, the test and proof of the reality of their repentance; and 'by the act of pardoning their slayers they have entered into the divine life of forgiveness.'[3]

The band came towards the poets, begging Dante to wait and see if he knew any of them, that he might carry word back to earth. Disclaiming all knowledge of them, he yet promises, for the sake of that peace which he pursues 'from world to world,' to do anything within his power to please them. Then follow conversations with three souls who are evidently singled out as representative victims of three of the principal causes of violence and bloodshed in Dante's day. Jacopo del Cassero of Fano was murdered by one of the brutal tyrant-lords with whom Italy swarmed; Buonconte da Montefeltro, leader of the Aretine Ghibellines, was slain in battle, a victim of the political factions which rent

[1] The penitent thief is, of course, the great Scriptural example.
[2] *Purg.* v. 52-57.
[3] *A Study of Dante*, by Susan E. Blow (p. 46)—an interesting and suggestive little book.

the country in pieces; and La Pia, a lady of Siena, is said to have been the victim of her husband's jealousy.

The first speaker is Jacopo del Cassero, a member of a noble Guelph family of Fano in the March of Ancona, between Romagna and Naples (line 69). Villani tells us that he took part in the Guelph expedition against Arezzo in 1288.[1] In 1296 he was elected Podestà of Bologna, and during his term of office he provoked the deadly hatred of Azzo VIII., Marquis of Este, the tyrant of Ferrara, partly by political hostility and partly by abusive speech, calling him, it is said, a liar and traitor.[2] In 1298 he accepted the office of Podestà in Milan in order, it is thought, to be at a safe distance from Azzo's vengeance. Unfortunately this merely put him within its reach. On his way from Venice to Milan, he was pursued and overtaken at Oriaco, where he was murdered by the bravoes of the Marquis. Had he only fled in another direction to the town of La Mira in Venetia instead of to the fens, he thinks he might have escaped:

> 'I to the marshes ran, and the reeds and mire
> Did so entangle me I fell, and there I saw
> A lake grow from my veins upon the ground.'[3]

There, in the desolate marsh-land, without the aid of priest or sacrament, the murdered man as he watched his life-blood ebb away, repented of his sins, forgave his enemies, and made his peace with God. But even yet he seems unable to clear the Paduans of some complicity in his death. It was in their territory he was murdered, and it can scarcely be by chance that he calls them the Antenori:

[1] *Chronicle*, vii. 120.

[2] Dr. Moore in a note says: 'This Marchese Azzo da Este is the same scoundrel whom Dante brands (1) as the murderer of his father (*Inf.* xii. 111): (2) as the murderer, by treachery, of Jacopo del Cassero (*Purg.* v. 77): (3) as the seducer of "La Ghisolabella" (*Inf.* xviii. 56); in addition to his part in the atrocious act here referred to [his purchase of Beatrice, daughter of Charles II., as if she had been a slave—*Purg.* xx. 79-81]. He was still living in 1300 (*d.* 1308), so that Dante could not have the satisfaction of saying that he found him in Hell. But he has done his best for him in default of this, by "putting his name among his other notes," as he grimly says in *Inf.* xxxii. 93' (*Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 292).

[3] *Purg.* v. 82-84.

'The deep wounds through which
Issued the blood wherein I had my seat,
Were dealt me in the bosom of the Antenori.'

Antenor, the Trojan who betrayed Troy, was regarded as the founder of the city of Padua; and for this treachery, the Second Ring of Cocytus, the hell of Traitors to their Country, is named Antenora.[1] The idea certainly seems to be that he suspected the Paduans of having been treacherously in league with Este to secure his death. However this may be, the tragedy is past; and now his one desire is that Dante when he returns to earth entreat his friends in Fano where his body lies, to pray for his soul—not, it must be remembered, that it may escape from Purgatory, but that it may the sooner enter it and 'purge away its grievous offences.'

The second conversation brings us to an episode which bites into the memory with the full strength of Dante's sombre imagination. The speaker is Buonconte da Montefeltro, leader of the Aretine Ghibellines at the battle of Campaldino in 1289. If, as is commonly believed, Dante was present fighting on the other side, the story would have a peculiarly vivid interest for him.[2] The Aretines were defeated and their leader slain, but his body was never found. It is out of this mysterious disappearance that Dante constructs the weird story in which Buonconte tells the secret of his fate. It is one of those great passages which must be quoted entire—'a passage not less notable,' says Ruskin, 'for its close description of what the writer feared and disliked, than for the ineffable tenderness, in which

[1] *Inf.* xxxii. 70 ff. Villani (i. 17) says he first founded Venice which was called after him Antenora, and then Padua, where his grave was still to be seen. He notes that Virgil (*Æn.* i. 242-248) makes him quite innocent of treachery to Troy.

[2] Lionardo Bruni in his *Life of Dante* quotes a lost letter in which Dante describes his feelings in the battle, and says he drew a plan of the fight. He adds a sarcastic hit at Boccaccio's *Life*: 'I could wish that our Boccaccio had made mention of this valour rather than of his falling in love at nine years old and such like trifles, which he tells of so great a man. But what can you expect? "The tongue goes where the tooth aches"; and "His discourse who loves drinking is ever of wines"' (Wicksteed's *Early Lives of Dante*, pp. 117-122).

Dante is always raised as much above all other poets, as in softness the rose above all other flowers':

Then said another: 'Ah, be that desire
Fulfilled that draws thee to the lofty mountain,
As thou with kindly pity aidest mine.
I was of Montefeltro, I am Buonconte;
Giovanna, nor none other cares for me:
Hence among these I go with downcast brow.'
And I to him: 'What violence or what chance
Led thee astray so far from Campaldino,
That never has thy sepulture been known?'
'Oh,' he replied, 'at Casentino's foot
Crosses a water which has for name the Archiano,
Born above the Hermitage in Apennine.[1]
There where the name thereof becometh void
Did I arrive, pierced through the throat,
Fleeing on foot, and bloodying the plain.
There did I lose my sight, and my speech
Did in the name of Mary end; and there
I fell, and my flesh remained alone.
Truth will I tell, and thou re-tell it 'mong the living;
The Angel of God took me, and he of hell
Cried: "O thou from heaven, why robb'st thou me?
Thou carriest away the eternal part of him
For one little tear which takes him from me;
But I will make of the other other governing."
Well knowest thou how in the air is gathered
That moist vapour which returns to water,
Soon as it mounts to where the cold condenses it.
He joined that evil will, which only evil seeks,
With intellect, and moved the mist and wind
By virtue of the power his nature gave.
Thereafter, when the day was spent, the valley
From Pratomagno to the great yoke he covered
With mist, and made the heaven above o'ercast,
So that the pregnant air was turned to water:
The rain fell, and to the trenches came
Whate'er of it the earth endured not;
And as it came together into great streams,
Towards the royal river with such speed
It headlong rushed, that nothing held it back.
My frozen body close upon its outlet
The raging Archiano found, and that swept it
Into the Arno, and loosed upon my breast the cross
I made of me when the agony o'ercame me;

[1] The Convent of Camaldoli. Where the name of the Archiano becomes void is where that river falls into the Arno.

It rolled me by the banks and by the bottom;
Then with its booty covered and begirt me.'[1]

Comment almost invariably ruins a passage like this, but Ruskin's remarks really bring out the pathos and desolation of the lonely death. 'Observe,' he says, 'Buonconte, as he dies, crosses his arms over his breast, pressing them together, partly in his pain, partly in prayer. His body thus lies by the river shore, as on a sepulchral monument, the arms folded into a cross. The rage of the river, under the influence of the evil demon, *unlooses this cross*, dashing the body supinely away, and rolling it over by bank and bottom. Nothing can be truer to the action of a stream in fury than these lines. And how desolate is it all! The lonely flight,—the grisly wound, "pierced in the throat,"—the death, without help or pity,—only the name of Mary on the lips,—and the cross folded over the heart. Then the rage of the demon and the river,—the noteless grave,—and, at last, even she who had been most trusted forgetting him,—

"Giovanna, nor none else, have care for me."

There is, I feel assured, nothing else like it in all the range of poetry; a faint and harsh echo of it, only, exists in one Scottish ballad, "The Twa Corbies."'[2]

The story, indeed, carries us straight back to the heart of the Middle Ages, and to beliefs which probably raise in us nothing but a smile. But it was no smiling matter to the men of those days. It was their solemn faith that the soul of man is the great prize for which the 'principalities and powers' of Heaven and Hell wage their endless warfare. It was partly a reflection of their own moral experience, and partly an inference from certain passages of Scripture, such as St. Jude's reference to the *Assumption of Moses*: 'Michael the archangel, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses.' Of this contest mediæval art is full. Good angels are

[1] *Purg.* v. 85-129. For an account of the battle, see Villani's *Chronicle*, vii. 131.

[2] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. xv. § 21.

pictured waiting for penitent souls as they leave the body, and demons for the impenitent; while sometimes they are seen struggling in the air for possession of a doubtful soul, as in the great fresco of the 'Triumph of Death' in the Campo Santo of Pisa.

The full significance of Buonconte's salvation comes out only when set alongside the perdition of his father, Count Guido of Montefeltro, in Canto xxvii. of the *Inferno*. The contrast in the endings of the two lives evidently laid hold of the poet's imagination. The father lived out the full span of human life, dying in 1298, nine years after his son was slain at Campaldino. On the approach of old age he 'lowered sails and gathered in the ropes,' to use his own words, that he might sail calmly and safely into the port of death. He made his peace with the Church, by which he had been several times excommunicated, and joined the Franciscan Order. So secure, indeed, seemed his salvation, that St. Francis himself came to meet his soul at death as one of his Cordeliers. 'One of the Black Cherubim,' however, appeared and successfully disputed his claim: ever since he gave the fraudulent advice to Pope Boniface, the demon had been 'at his hair.' That one sin dragged him down, as it were, from Heaven's gate: in the Bolgia of Evil Counsellors Dante saw the tongue of fire which stole and hid his crafty soul. All this is reversed in every particular in the case of the son. Buonconte had no opportunity of quietly and calmly settling his account with God. The end broke in upon him with sudden violence, and caught him so completely in the midst of his sins that his evil angel made absolutely sure of his soul. No wonder the fiend was indignant to find that one dying cry to Mary, 'one little tear,' had power to snatch it out of his hand and save it at the very door of Hell. What, then, is the meaning of this deliberately contrasted picture of father and son? Doubtless it represents, in part at least, as Bartoli says, Dante's personal feeling towards the two men; we may 'conjecture that the comparison between the vacillating and fox-like political conduct of Guido, and the straight-

forward integrity of the son, may have contributed to the very different fate allotted to each of them in the Poem. The brave soldier, who fell at Campaldino, and the crafty counsellor of Pope Boniface, abide in Dante's mind united, coupled together, and then disjoined. The qualities of the one excite one's feelings of aversion, those of the other a sentiment of respect and admiration.'[1] But there is a reason beneath all this. Dante wishes to show, from two contrasted sides, the final and absolute necessity of repentance, and that independently of the presence or absence of the Church's absolution. Guido appeared to have done everything that could be done to secure salvation—had made his peace with the Church, joined a religious order, received a promise of pardon from Christ's own Vicar. The one thing he had not done was—repent. 'For,' as the Black Cherub says to him,

> 'Who repents not cannot be absolved,
> Nor can one repent and will at once,
> Because of the contradiction which consents not.'

On the other hand, the one thing his son Buonconte did was to repent. He had no time for all the ecclesiastical ritual of absolution with which the father was so careful to secure himself. Struck down suddenly in battle, fleeing till he faints from loss of blood among the lonely hills, with time for nothing but one dying cry for mercy, with no priest to shrive his soul and grant him absolution, 'one little tear' has virtue to rescue him from the powers of evil. Nothing could show more clearly the absolute necessity and saving power of repentance. With it, a man may dispense with the entire ritual of the Church; without it, the pardon of a Pope is but empty breath. 'When it is said "whatsoever thou shalt bind," if "whatsoever" bore an unlimited sense, . . . he might even absolve me while impenitent, which God Himself cannot do.'[2]

[1] Quoted by Vernon, *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 187 n.

[2] *De. Mon.* iii. 8. This, of course, is only the doctrine of the Church. Aquinas teaches that mortal sin can indeed be forgiven without the *sacrament* of Penance, but not without the *virtue* of Penance—*i.e.* the true and penitent turning of the human will to God (*Summa*, iii. q. lxxxvi. a. 2).

Dante's view of the storm is equally mediæval, though also it is one which perhaps we have not yet perfectly outgrown. It is possible that he is describing a storm which actually did follow the battle of Campaldino; and the total disappearance of Buonconte's body may have been accounted for at the time in much the same way as here. But the manner in which the tempest is raised invests the very elements with the mystery and awe of spiritual wickedness in high places. The demon is a servant of 'the prince of the power of the air,' and as such has a certain dominion over the forces of Nature herself. The intellect which he has in virtue of his angelic nature is not destroyed by his fall, but, being now joined to an evil will, it only makes him a more terrible agent of destruction.[1] This power of demons to raise storms was probably regarded as a relic of that government of Nature, with which it was believed they had been invested in their unfallen state. Scripture, for example, speaks of angels as holding the four winds. When St. Paul writes of 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,'[2] he probably had in mind the Rabbinic idea that when Satan was cast out of Heaven he made his abode in the mid-air, which is now filled with his angels. Milton reproduces it in *Paradise Regained.* Satan on hearing that Jesus had been attested Son of God, ascends into the air and summons his forces to consult upon the crisis with which they are confronted:

> In mid air
> To council summons all his mighty peers,
> Within thick clouds and dark tenfold involved,
> A gloomy consistory.[3]

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[1] Aquinas, *Summa*, i. q. lxiv. a. 1.

[2] Eph. ii. 2.

[3] Bk. i. 39-42. St. Bernard thinks the air was assigned to Satan to torture him with envy, as he contrasts his wild, gloomy, barren abode with the heaven above and the earth beneath (*Canticles*: Sermon 54). Newman, preaching from the words: 'Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire' (Ps. civ. 4), holds that winds, lightning, and all processes of the natural world are set in motion by great angelic intelligences. Even so enlightened a theologian as Dr. Bushnell regarded storms and convulsions of Nature as due to Satanic powers—part and

It is evidently for this reason that the Mountain of Purgatory above the Gate of St. Peter is no longer subject to changes of rain or hail, clouds or lightning: it is beyond the dominion of 'the prince of the power of the air.'[1]

The third spirit who speaks to Dante is one whose identity and fate seem destined to remain in impenetrable mystery:

> 'Ah, when thou hast returned unto the world,
> And rested thee from thy long journeying,'
> After the second followed the third spirit,
> 'Do thou remember me who am La Pia;
> Siena made me, unmade me Maremma:
> He knoweth it, who had encircled first,
> Espousing me, my finger with his gem'.[2]

The uncertainty springs from the fact that there seem to have been two ladies of the name of Pia. The first belonged to the Sienese family of the Guastelloni, and was the wife of Baldo de' Tolomei. It seems certain that this cannot be the Pia of the *Purgatorio*, since Banchi has recently proved 'from documents discovered in the Sienese archives that she was still alive, as the widow of Baldo, eighteen years after the assumed date of Dante's vision.'[3] Scartazzini, following Benvenuto and the *Anonimo Fiorentino*, is probably right in holding that the Pia here was a member of the Tolomei family, and wife of Nello (Paganello) della Pietra, who murdered her. The story is that Nello, whether from jealousy or his own desire to marry the beautiful

parcel of the original shock and dislocation which the whole material framework of the world suffered at the Fall of man (*Nature and the Supernatural*, chaps. v.-vii.). In this, of course, he is but reproducing Milton's idea that the very constitution of Nature received a shock from which it has never recovered (*Par. Lost*, x. 649 ff.).

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 43-54. See p. 286 ff. Among the reasons for consecrating and ringing bells Durandus, Bishop of Mende (1220-1296), in his *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (Bk. i. chap. iv.), gives the following: 'that the hostile legions and all the snares of the Enemy may be repulsed; that the rattling hail, the whirlwinds, and the violence of tempests and lightning may be restrained; the deadly thunder and blasts of wind held off; and that such as hear may flee for refuge to the bosom of our holy Mother the Church, bending every knee to the standard of the sacred rood' (*The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, p. 71).

[2] *Purg.* v. 130-136.

[3] Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*, p. 428.

widow of Guy de Montfort, conveyed her to his castle in the Maremma, and there did her to death in some mysterious fashion. According to Benvenuto and the *Anonimo*, he ordered his servants to fling her into a gorge so deep that she was never again heard of; but later writers say he simply allowed the deadly air of the marshes to do its work.[1] In this uncertainty the story must meantime rest. It was just the kind of mysterious ending of a human life in which Dante's imagination found itself at home; and the wonder is that he did not work it up into a tragedy of the Othello-Desdemona type. The sombre and mysterious tale he could have told of what happened in the lonely castle of the fever-haunted Maremma, might have rivalled the tragedy of Francesca or the horror of the Tower of Famine. Yet the four lines into which the story is condensed make perhaps, by their very reticence, a stronger appeal to the imagination. One seems to see a very beautiful and even sacred reason for Dante's restraint. He appears to have been too deeply moved by this poor lady's fate to enlarge upon it. He saw in her a soul as friendless in the other world as she had been in this. She stands in pathetic contrast to all the shades already named, in that she has no friend left on earth in whose prayers she could claim an interest. 'Buonconte remembers his Giovanna and the others who have forgotten him; Manfred wishes to be remembered to Constance, and Jacopo to the people of Fano that they might pray for him. The poor Pia has no name in her domestic sanctuary, and prays to Dante alone to remember her.'[2] She makes her request with a timid and gentle courtesy in marked and intentional contrast

[1] Mr. E. Gardner, in *The Story of Siena* (p. 258), states that, in spite of painters and novelists, the fair fame of Nello has been cleared by recent research 'from the imputation of having been the husband—and therefore the murderer—of La Pia'; but he gives no reference in proof. Mr. Maurice Hewlett dismisses airily all such enquiries as 'fruitless, empty exercises.' 'Francesca's age, La Pia's marriages, Beatrice's substance: how in the name of Wonder can such things matter? Dante, the author (as far as we are concerned) of their being, has provided for all these things' (*The Road in Tuscany*, ii. 144). It is the protest of one to whom history is only the raw material of romance, but it is not without reason.

[2] Scartazzini's *Milan Commentary*, 3rd ed., p. 398.

to the rude, unmannerly demands of the crowd through which Dante had soon to push his way:

'When thou art rested from thy long journeying';

and the poet, moved by her utter friendlessness, takes upon himself, in the silence of his heart, the sacred task of prayer for the gentle lady's soul.

CHAPTER VI

SORDELLO OF MANTUA

No sooner had La Pia proffered her gentle request for Dante's prayers, than the whole crowd of spirits broke out into the most importunate and unmannerly demands for the same favour. Dante represents himself, indeed, as almost mobbed by them. He compares himself to the winner in the game of zara or hazard who, when he rises to go, is attacked by a crowd of impudent onlookers for a share of his winnings: one runs in front of him, another plucks him from behind, a third importunes at his side. He pushes on, listening to this one and that, and clearing his way by giving something to the sturdiest of the beggars. Just so did Dante extricate himself from the unmannerly mob by promising prayers right and left. Probably the souls he names are those who were most importunate. Two natives of Arezzo come first:

> There was the Aretine who from the arms
> Untamed of Ghin di Tacco had his death;
> And he who running in the rout was drowned.[1]

The former is Benincasa da Laterina, a well-known judge of Arezzo, who met with a most tragic death for having administered justice. As assessor to the Podestà of Siena, he condemned to death a relative of the Ghin di Tacco here named, said by some to have been his brother and a robber like himself. Fearing the vendetta, Benincasa got himself transferred to Rome; and one day sitting in the hall of justice he was stabbed on the bench by Ghino, who had gained an entrance in the disguise of a beggar. The murderer made good his

[1] *Purg.* vi. 13-15.

escape, and indeed was rewarded rather than punished. Benvenuto, says Toynbee, 'described him as a sort of Robin Hood, who if he robbed a merchant would restore him part of his gold; or, if a fat priest fell into his hands, would take his mule and give him a worn-out hack in exchange; but, if he came across a poor scholar, would make him a present of money, and recommend him to pay attention to his studies.' On the intercession of a wealthy abbot whom he had captured and treated well, Pope Boniface knighted the highwayman and granted him a rich priory. The second Aretine is identified with Guccio of the Ghibelline family of the Tarlati. There is considerable uncertainty as to his fate; but the account generally received is that after the defeat of the Aretines at Campaldino he was pursued so hotly that he was driven into the Arno and drowned. Another account has it that he was pursuer not pursued, and that he followed the enemy so impetuously that he perished in the river.

Of the third soul named, Federico Novello, who 'prayed with outstretched hands,' little is known beyond that he was a member of the great Conti Guidi house, and that he was slain at Bibbiena in 1289. He is coupled here with another soul who is mysteriously indicated as

> he of Pisa
> Who made the good Marzucco seem so strong.

'The good Marzucco' was a member of the family of the Scornigiani of Pisa, a doctor of laws, who joined the Franciscan Order in 1286. It is his son Farinata whom Dante finds here in Ante-Purgatory. Under what circumstances he met his end seems to be quite uncertain. If we accept Benvenuto's account, he was beheaded by Count Ugolino, the tyrant of Pisa, whom Dante saw frozen in the ice of Antenora;[1] and Marzucco 'showed himself strong' by begging his son's body for burial with so much humility that Ugolino could not refuse his request. Another account which makes him strike his son's murderer dead is not likely

[1] *Inf.* xxxii. 124 ff.

to be true, else Dante would scarcely have called him 'the good Marzucco.' He knew that forgiveness, not revenge, is the true sign of strength.

'I saw Count Orso' is all that Dante says of the next spirit. He was the son of that Napoleone degli Alberti whom Dante saw in the ice with his brother Alessandro, frozen together in the same hatred in which they slew each other. Count Orso is said to have been slain by his cousin Alberto, son of Alessandro—doubtless in pursuance of the blood-feud in which their fathers perished.[1]

The last spirit singled out by name is the most interesting and important of all:

> the soul divided
> From its body by hatred and by envy,
> So it said, and not for any fault committed—
> Pierre de la Brosse I mean; and here provide
> While still on earth the Lady of Brabant,
> So that for this she be of no worse flock.[2]

The fortunes of this Pier della Broccia are very similar to those of the unhappy suicide, Pier delle Vigne, and, like his, enveloped in mystery. According to tradition, he was a surgeon of humble birth who rose to be chamberlain to Philip III. of France. Louis, son of Philip by his first wife, and heir to the throne, died suddenly in 1276, and Pierre accused the Queen, Mary of Brabant, of having poisoned him in order to secure the succession to her own son. In revenge, she is said to have accused him of an attempt upon her honour; or, according to another account, to have forged letters from the chamberlain to Alphonso X. of Castile, with whom Philip was at war. Whatever the exact charge was, Pierre was suddenly arrested and hanged for it; and so firmly did Dante believe in his innocence that he attributed his death to hatred and envy, and warns 'the Lady of Brabant' to repent, lest she go at last to a worse herd than this for her treachery.

Before passing on it may be worth while pausing to

[1] *Inf.* xxxii. 16-51.
[2] *Purg.* vi. 19-24. For Pier delle Vigne, see *Inf.* xiii. 31 ff.

note the significance of the words in which Dante describes these souls and the whole crowd that thronged round him:

> those shades
> Who only prayed that some one else may pray,
> So as to hasten their becoming holy—[1]

that is, by a quicker entrance into the purifying discipline of Purgatory proper. These words are interesting because they suggest the conception of prayer held by Dante as a very high and noble exercise of our spiritual powers, which rises and falls with the soul's moral condition. If one is not mistaken, he indicates four distinct gradations in the power of prayer. The lowest stage is that of the souls before us. They have lost the power of prayer even for themselves, not to speak of others. Their whole conception of prayer is low and selfish, for that is certainly what Dante means by comparing them to parasites hanging on to the winner in a game of hazard. When we reach the Valley of the Princes, we shall find the souls there able to pray for themselves, but, so far as appears, for themselves alone. It is only when we get inside the Gate of Purgatory proper that we find spirits so far advanced in the unselfish life that they can pray for others as well as for themselves:

> Thus for themselves and us good furtherance
> Those shades imploring went.[2]

Finally, when Paradise is reached, the power of prayer is perfectly regained and so purified of every taint of

[1] *Purg.* vi. 26, 27. A quotation from Dr. Hettinger may throw light on the importuning of Dante for his prayers: 'This division into Ante-Purgatory and Purgatory proper had a real foundation in the canonical penances of the Primitive Church. The penitents were divided into four classes—the mourners, the hearers, the prostrate, and the stationary (*consistentes*). The first class of penitents, "the mourners," were forbidden to enter the church, but stood without the porch, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, and *imploring with tears the prayers of the worshippers as they passed.* "The hearers" assisted at the prayers from the vestibule, but not at the mass. "The prostrate" assisted at the Mass of Catechumens, and left after the sermon, before the Preface. "The stationary" remained for the sacrifice, but did not go up to make their offering, with the rest of the faithful, and were not allowed to receive Holy Communion' (*Dante's Divina Commedia*, 164).

[2] *Purg.* xi. 25, 26.

selfishness that the saints pray only for others, as St. Bernard did for Dante.[1] In short, sin destroys the power of prayer and turns it into selfishness at the beginning of the penitent life, and it is only as the soul is purified that the power is restored. Dante would have agreed with the view of Coleridge that 'the act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human heart is capable, praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties,' and that the great mass of worldly men have entirely lost the power.[2] The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* show how it is destroyed by sin, and returns only in proportion as the soul regains spiritual health.

We saw how Dante extricated himself from the importunate crowd by promising prayers right and left. The moment he was clear of them, however, he was assailed by doubts of the efficacy of prayer for those whose fate is already decided—doubts suggested by Virgil himself who represents Reason. He reminds his Guide of the line in the *Æneid* in which the Sibyl rebukes Palinurus for his impious prayer to be allowed to cross the Stygian River while his body was still unburied:

Desine fata Deûm flecti sperare precando.[3]

'Cease hoping that the decrees of the Gods can be bent by prayers.' Does not this mean that prayer is vain, an impious attempt to alter Heaven's decrees of judgment?

[1] *Par.* xxxiii. 22-39.

[2] In a note in Coleridge's *Table Talk*, the editor, his nephew and son-in-law, narrates an incident which well illustrates what I conceive to be Dante's view. Two years before his death the poet said to him that prayer was 'the most arduous act of the reason and will': '"*To pray*, to *pray* as God would have us; this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare upon earth. *Teach* us to pray, O Lord!" And then he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him.' Coleridge evidently felt himself to be one of the souls 'who pray only that others pray.'

[3] *Æn.* vi. 376. The question is discussed by Aquinas, *Summa*, ii-ii. q. lxxxiii. a. 2.

Virgil's reply is that the cases are not parallel. The prayer of Palinurus was 'separate from God.' These words may mean either that Palinurus was already in Hell, or that, being a heathen, he was beyond the Divine grace; but probably they refer to the nature of his prayer. He was seeking to *overturn* a decree of Heaven; whereas in the present case the object of prayer was to *fulfil* that decree by another means. What, then, is this other means? The answer is one of the most beautiful and suggestive things in the poem:

> 'The summit of judgment is not lowered
> Because the fire of love fulfilleth in one moment
> What he must satisfy who here is lodged.'[1]

In other words, the decree of God is that satisfaction must be made for sin. The common mode of satisfaction is the sinner's own suffering, the painful discipline of penance, and the slow undoing year by year of the evil habits which year by year had wrought into the soul. But there is 'a more excellent way.' Love is the strongest thing in the universe, the power that 'moves the sun and the other stars';[2] and therefore it can accomplish in a moment what mere pain and self-discipline take laborious years to do. It is not suffering and penance but love, that God's decree cares for most; and the prayer of any soul that loves enough can shorten the time of delay, and hasten the beginning of the purifying process. By this 'fire of love' 'the summit of judgment is not lowered,' the decree of God is not broken; it is simply fulfilled in a higher, Diviner way. There is surely something very beautiful in this idea. It shows that Dante is not, as some think, entangled and imprisoned in the mechanical rules of the penitential discipline of the Church. One moment of 'the fire of love' can do more to satisfy God, and burn out evil, than half an eternity of penances.[3]

[1] *Purg.* vi. 37-39. [2] *Par.* xxxiii. 145.

[3] Contrast with this Peter Damiani's Canon of penitence, in which sins were tabulated with their equivalents of Purgatorial pain: 'A day's penance was equal to twenty strokes on the hand, or to fifty psalms; a year of penance was equivalent to three thousand strokes rightly counted, if accompanied by the singing of psalms.' A friend of his, Dominicus, was

On the whole subject, however, it is to be noted that Virgil gives his opinion with great humility, recognizing that Reason cannot fathom the mysterious power of prayer. He therefore enjoins Dante not to rest in so great a doubt until she explain it to him who is 'a light between truth and intellect'—that is, reveals truth to the intellect as light reveals an object to the eye. The reference is to Beatrice, the Heavenly Wisdom, whom he is soon to meet upon the Mountain-top, 'smiling and blessed' in her clear vision of such high mysteries. At the name of Beatrice all Dante's weariness vanishes, and he urges his Guide to hurry upwards, evidently thinking to see her before nightfall. Even yet he does not understand how great is the purifying process necessary for the vision of the mysteries of theology; and Virgil has to check his foolish hope by telling him the sun will return before he climb far enough to see her. As a matter of fact, the sun returns thrice.[1]

At this point the Pilgrims suddenly catch sight of a solitary soul, to whom they make their way for information about the path. It is Sordello, the famous troubadour of Mantua, and one of the most mysterious figures in the *Commedia*. Dante appears to have had a great admiration of him as patriot and as poet. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 15), he speaks of him as a man 'distinguished by his eloquence not only in poetry but in every form of speech.' He represents him here as 'all, all alone'—a proud solitary soul who had nothing in common with the vulgar, unmannerly rabble which Dante had just shaken off with so much difficulty. His whole bearing is haughty and superb, like a lion in repose:

> O Lombard soul,
> How wert thou standing lofty and disdainful,
> And in the moving of thine eyes dignified and slow!
> Nothing whatever did it say to us,
> But let us go our way, eyeing us only
> After the fashion of a lion when he couches.[2]

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so expert in the '*disciplina*,' as it was called, that he 'could scourge away a century or more' in six days! (Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, iv. 106, English Translation).

[1] *Purg.* vi. 43-57.

[2] *Purg.* vi. 61-66.

Browning's *Sordello* rises instinctively to the mind, but it gives no help in the present passage. It is an almost purely imaginary reconstruction of the troubadour's life and character, of no value as history. He regards him as Dante's forerunner, 'a herald-star' which the great Florentine absorbed into 'the consummate orb' of his own passionate genius. Browning sets himself the difficult task of 'disentwining' the softer gleam of Sordello from that 'sea of glass mingled with fire' which is Dante. Whether he succeeds in this or not, the poem sheds no light on the problem of Dante's admiration for Sordello, or why he chooses him as guide through the Valley of the Princes. The little that is known of his life only deepens the mystery. He was born at Goito near Mantua in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The story of his life is far from pleasant reading. In early youth he was attached to the household of Ricciardo, Count of S. Bonifazio, in Verona, who had married Cunizza, daughter of Ezzelino II. da Romano. Her brother, the terrible Ezzelino III., instigated Sordello to run off with Cunizza to Treviso. While living there, he married a lady of the Strasso family; but this did not prevent his carrying on an intrigue with Cunizza, on account of which he was forced to flee to Provence to escape her brother's vengeance. Cunizza—the Palma of Browning's *Sordello* —is set by Dante in the Heaven of Venus in Paradise, and this is probably her lover's final destination also.[1] We need not follow Sordello's wanderings from court to court of Spain, Portugal, Provence, and various parts of France. It is his connection with Charles of Anjou which brings him again into relation with the narrative before us, and raises a very curious problem. By his marriage with Beatrice, youngest daughter of Count Raymond Berenger, Charles became Lord of Provence, and Sordello enrolled himself under his banner. It seems certain that when Charles, at the Pope's invitation, invaded Italy to assume the sovereignty of Sicily and Apulia, Sordello accompanied the army that

[1] *Par.* ix. 13 ff.

went by land. His relations with his master, indeed, were not always of the most harmonious kind. In one of his poems he complains that he was 'unfortunate in lord, love, and lady'; to which Charles replied that he was ungrateful: 'I have always cherished and honoured him. I have given him substantial property and a wife of the kind he wished; but he is a fool and a nuisance, and he would not be grateful if you gave him a county.'[1] In 1266, the troubadour seems to have been in prison at Novara, and the Pope thought him of sufficient importance to interest himself for his release. In a brief of September 22 of that year, Clement IV. remonstrates with Charles for allowing his faithful follower to languish in prison, after the services he had rendered. From this it has been inferred that Sordello was present at the battle of Benevento in the preceding February; and we know that when the spoils of war were divided after the execution of Conradin, the last of the Hohenstaufens, Sordello received as his share several castles in Apulia. This was in 1269, and in the same year, the troubadour suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, and the castles passed into the hands of others. From the place assigned him in Ante-Purgatory it is evident that Dante believed Sordello died a violent death, but under what circumstances seems to be absolutely unknown. His repentance at the last hour was probably a fiction of Dante's imagination.

Now, there can be no doubt that this story of Sordello's life leaves on our minds a totally different impression from that produced by Dante's description of the man and his evident admiration of him. It is difficult to recognize in the restless, wandering, licentious, unscrupulous troubadour and soldier of fortune, the majestic form, with slow grave eyes as of a lion couchant, which Dante here describes. But the chief difficulty springs from the fact that Sordello seems to be brought in as the ideal of patriotism, in order to rebuke the factions which in every city were destroying Italy. The reserved and haughty shade, instead of

[1] See *The Troubadours at Home* by Professor Justin H. Smith, i. 269.

answering the poets' question about the shortest way up, asked them of their country and life; and when Virgil in reply began, 'Mantua'—Sordello, suddenly swept out of his proud reserve by the name of his own birthplace,

> Rose towards him from the place where first he was,
> Saying: 'O Mantuan, I am Sordello
> Of thine own land!' and one embraced the other.[1]

On seeing this, Dante suddenly broke into the famous outburst of patriotic sorrow and indignation, suggested by the contrast between this warm greeting of compatriots in the other world and the suicidal strife of Italy in this:

> Ah servile Italy, the hostelry of woe!
> Ship without pilot in so great a tempest,
> No Lady thou of Provinces, but brothel!
> That noble spirit was thus swift, only
> At the sweet sound of his own native land,
> To give its citizen glad greeting here:
> And now in thee abide not without war
> Thy living men, and one doth gnaw the other
> Of those whom one wall and one fosse enclose!
> Search, wretched one, all round about the shores
> Thy seaboard, and then look within thy bosom,
> If any part of thee enjoyeth peace![2]

When we remember Sordello's life, this seems utterly inexplicable. 'Opening a career by abandoning his native land, attaining to fame by singing in a foreign tongue on a foreign soil, and enriched by fighting against Italy for a Gallic oppressor, he became in Dante's poem the ideal patriot, the embodiment of Italian aspirations.'[3] Remembering Dante's opinion of Charles of Anjou and the whole house to which he belonged, it is quite impossible to believe that he meant to represent an Italian who fought for the French usurper as the ideal of Italian patriotism. Assuming, as we must, that Dante knew the facts, even his great power of idealization could not so gloriously transfigure Sordello beyond recognition. The solution, however, is

[1] *Purg.* vi. 73-75.
[2] *Purg.* vi. 76-87.
[3] *The Troubadours at Home*, i. 272.

easy and natural if we bear in mind the point of view which Dante here occupies, that, namely, of the contrast between earth and Purgatory. Here, he means to tell us, is a man who during his earthly life was as unpatriotic as the rest of his countrymen. He took his share in its feuds and factions, fought under the banner of a foreign invader, and accepted from his hand his share of the spoils of war. Now he has passed into a world where all the sin and folly of such sins against his fatherland is revealed to him. It is an essential part of his repentance, and the proof of its reality, that he welcomes with great joy a citizen of the land he had so deeply wronged; just as, a little farther up, it is proof of the repentance of his lord, Charles of Anjou, that he lays aside the feuds of earth and sings *Salve Regina* with Peter of Aragon, his former enemy and rival for the dominion of Sicily.[1] This appears to be the solution of what is otherwise inexplicable. Sordello cannot possibly be Dante's ideal of Italian patriotism, else words lose all meaning. He must have known perfectly that during his earthly life he spent his great powers in unpatriotic attempts against his country; and it is precisely this fact which gives point and emphasis to the change of spirit and attitude created by the revelation of the higher world into which he has entered. From the standpoint of that new life he sees now the sin of all the wrong he did his native land in thus selfishly carving his own fortunes out of her ruin.

Sordello is one of three souls chosen to act as guides to the Pilgrims in Purgatory, one for each of the three great divisions of the Mountain: Sordello here in Ante-Purgatory, Statius in Purgatory proper, and Matelda in the Earthly Paradise on the top. The need for them arises out of the limitations of Virgil: at each great stage of the higher life, the natural Reason of man requires the aid of souls who have had experience of the means of purification. The question remains, however, why Sordello is here chosen for this task. The first reason we have already seen: the ardent love

[1] *Purg.* vii. 124-126. See pp. 100, 101.

of country which his repentance has kindled in his heart. A second is undoubtedly his great admiration of Virgil. When he heard him say 'Mantua,' Sordello embraced him breast to breast; but when afterwards he said: 'I am Virgilius,' he bowed his brow, stooped, and embraced him 'where the inferior lays hold'—by knees or feet—exclaiming:

> 'O glory of the Latins,
> Through whom our language showed what it could do,
> O praise eternal of the place I came from,
> What merit or what favour shows thee to me?'[1]

It is partly for the same reason that Statius is chosen as guide in Purgatory proper; just as, on the other hand, Dante parted with the first among his friends, Guido Cavalcanti, because 'he held Virgil in disdain.'[2] The final reason, however, lies in the special region of the Ante-Purgatory through which the Pilgrims are about to pass—the Valley of the Princes. The guide here must be one who possessed some knowledge of the great ones of the earth and of their characters. Sordello had sojourned in many courts, seen many princes and kings, and in his famous poem on the death of Blacatz had courageously denounced their vices. This Blacatz was a rich baron of Aups in Provence, himself a singer, and the most generous of friends and patrons. The Lament attacks the ruling sovereigns and princes, from the Emperor downwards, with extraordinary audacity, declaring that the only remedy for the death of Blacatz would be to send his heart through the nations that their 'coward lords' might eat of it and thus gain the courage of which it was full. It is generally believed that it was this Lament which suggested to Dante the idea of making Sordello his guide through the Valley of the Princes.

The beginning of the long and passionate burst of lamentation over the condition of Italy which occupies the remainder of this Canto, has been already quoted. Dante proceeds to lay the blame for its distracted state on both Pope and Emperor. He compares Italy to a

[1] *Purg.* vii. 16-19.

[2] *Inf.* x. 63.

horse for which in vain Justinian made a bridle—the laws which he codified. The 'people that ought to have been devout'—that is, the Popes, whose duty it was to attend to things spiritual—refused 'to let Cæsar sit upon the saddle,' and insisted on holding the bridle of law themselves, on exercising, that is to say, the temporal power. The result is that there being no Emperor in the saddle to apply the spurs, the horse had grown into a vicious 'wild beast.' The meaning grows clear when we turn to the relations between Pope Boniface VIII. and the 'German Albert,' whom Dante proceeds to denounce, along with his 'father Rudolph,' for suffering Italy, 'the garden of the Empire,' to become a wilderness. The election of Albert as Emperor in 1298 involved him in a struggle with the spiritual power. Boniface refused to recognize his election, partly because his consent had not been asked, and partly because he regarded him as a traitor and regicide, inasmuch as he had slain his predecessor, the Emperor Adolph. 'He even summoned him before his tribunal and forbade the princes of the empire to look upon him as King of the Romans. It is said that he received the German envoys seated theatrically upon a throne, the crown on his head, and a sword in his hands, and that he angrily exclaimed, "I, I am the Emperor."'[1] This claim of absolute power over kings and kingdoms Boniface set forth four years later in its most high-handed form in his famous Bull *Unam Sanctam*: 'We declare, announce, and define, that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.' This was directed against Philip the Fair of France, with whom he was in sharp collision over this very question. Boniface now sought the aid of the man whom he had a few years before denounced as guilty of treason and regicide, and Albert made the most abject submission to him as his feudal superior. 'The Nuremberg Diplomas of July 17, 1303,' writes Gregorovius, 'are the pitiable witnesses of the slavish subjugation of the imperial power to the

[1] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 567, 568.

Papacy. The Roman King unblushingly admitted that the Pope alone bestowed the crown of empire, that the princes of the empire only possessed the elective right in virtue of the power bestowed by him, that everything that the empire and emperors possessed emanated from the papal grace. . . . To such profound abasement did the imperium sink in the person of the one-eyed and intellectually insignificant son of Rudolph. The head of the empire, the successor of the Hohenstaufens, acknowledged himself as a vassal of the Pope at the time when the King of France cited the latter before a General Council, because he had pronounced the royal power subject to the sacred chair.'[1]

Yet for all this abject submission Albert never sat in the saddle, never entered Italy; and for this long neglect of both himself and his father Dante prays that a just judgment of Heaven may fall upon his blood. It is a prophetic reference to his assassination by his nephew John in 1308.[2] It is necessary to remember that these are the things which lie behind Dante's denunciations of Pope and Emperor. He summons 'German Albert' to come and see for himself the frightful state of civil disorder into which his cowardly refusal to sit in the saddle had plunged the country through Guelph misgovernment. In the cities the great families waged constant feud—in Verona, the Montagues and Capulets; in Orvieto, the Monaldi and Filippeschi. Beyond the cities let him come and see the persecution of his nobles, his Ghibelline supporters, by the Guelphs, and 'how secure is Santafiora.' These words are, of course, ironical. Santafiora was the territory of the great Ghibelline family of the Aldobrandeschi in the Maremma. In Dante's time it was held by the Guelphs of Siena, who governed it so badly that it is said to have been infested with robbers. But it was at Rome itself that Papal misgovernment revealed its most terrible results:

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 577.

[2] For other references to Albert, see *Par.* xix. 115-117, and *Conv.* iv. 3. In the latter passage Dante declares Frederick II. the last Roman Emperor, in spite of the election of Rudolph, Adolph and Albert.

Come and see thy Rome that weepeth,
Widowed, alone, and day and night doth cry:
'My Cæsar, why dost thou not companion me?'
Come and see how much the folk love one another;
And if for us no pity moveth thee,
Come to shame thyself for thy renown![1]

The mournful picture drawn by Gregorovius of Rome in Dante's day fully justifies the poet's indignant denunciations of Pope and Emperor for the gross neglect of duty which made such a state of things possible in the very seat of government. 'Rome resembled a huge field, encircled with moss-covered walls, with tracts of wild and cultivated land, from which rose gloomy towers or castles, basilicas and convents crumbling to decay, and monuments of colossal size clothed with verdure; baths, broken aqueducts, colonnades of temples, isolated columns, and triumphal arches surmounted by towers; while a labyrinth of narrow streets, interrupted by rubbish heaps, led among these dilapidated remains, and the yellow Tiber, passing under broken stone bridges, flowed sadly through the ruinous waste. . . . Baths and circuses were overgrown with grass, and were here and there absolutely marshy. Everywhere that the eye rested might be seen gloomy, defiant, battlemented towers, built out of the monuments of the ancients, with crenelated enceintes of most original form, constructed of pieces of marble, bricks, and fragments of peperino. These were the castles and palaces of Guelph or Ghibelline nobles, who sat thirsting for battle in ruins on the classic hills, as though Rome were not a city but an open territory, the possession of which was to be disputed in daily warfare. There was not a single nobleman in Rome at the time who was not owner of a tower. In deeds of the period the possessions of the Romans in the city are occasionally specified as "towers, palaces, houses, and ruins." Families dwelt among ruins, in uncomfortable quarters, barred by heavy iron chains, with their relatives and retainers, and only now and then burst forth with the wild din of

[1] *Purg.* vi. 112-117.

arms, to make war on their hereditary enemies.'[1] When Rome was left 'widowed' indeed by the removal of the Papal Court to Avignon in 1308,[2] the state of the city and its neighbourhood sank to a still lower level. 'The absence of the Pope left the nobility more unbridled than ever; these hereditary houses now regarded themselves as masters of Rome, left without her master. Their mercenaries encamped on every road; travellers and pilgrims were robbed; places of worship remained empty.' Though Dante writes from the ideal standpoint of 1300, it must have been almost impossible for him to keep his knowledge of this later ruin from tinging his words here with a deeper indignation. Indeed, we may go further and say that the passage contains a secret warning to Henry VII. of Luxemburg against the neglect of Italy of which his predecessor was guilty:

> O German Albert, who abandonest
> Her who has grown untamed and savage,
> And oughtest to bestride her saddlebows,
> May a just judgment from the stars fall down
> Upon thy blood, and be it strange and manifest,
> Such that thy successor may have fear thereof.[3]

Now, Albert's successor was Henry VII., and if we assume that the passage was written between the assassination of Albert in 1308, and Henry's crossing of the Alps in 1310, its purpose may have been to decide the new Emperor's hesitation in entering Italy. When he did respond to the urgent invitation, 'widowed' Rome gave a sharp welcome to her Cæsar. In vain he fought his way from barricade to barricade and from tower to tower, through the streets; and after weeks of struggle had to content himself with an irregular coronation in the Lateran instead of St. Peter's. No wonder Henry asked the Romans indignantly if they had sent him so many urgent letters and messengers in

[1] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 658-660.

[2] This was the date of the formal resolution to remove the Papal Chair to Avignon. The Babylonish Captivity of the Church, however, is generally dated from 1305, the year of the election of Clement V., who never appeared in Rome at all.

[3] *Purg.* vi. 97-102.

order to make him the laughing-stock of the world.[1] It is certainly a curious commentary on Dante's picture of the widowed city weeping for her Cæsar, and complaining that he had left her alone and uncompanioned.

And then Dante turns suddenly on his native city with the bitterest sarcasm. How keenly his Florence must enjoy this castigation of others, he says, since she herself is so wise and prudent that it cannot touch her. Many others have justice in their hearts, but her people have it on their very lips. Many others refuse the burden of public office, but her citizens cry, 'I submit to the burden,' without being asked. Athens and Lacedæmon, famous for their laws, were mere novices compared with her, for the thread of law she spins in October snaps before the middle of November:

> How, oft within the time of thy remembrance,
> Laws, money, offices, and customs
> Hast thou remodelled, and renewed thy members?'[2]

She is like a sick woman who can find no rest on the softest down, and who turns and turns to ward off the pain, not knowing that change of position is unavailing when the fever is in the blood.

[1] See Gregorovius' vivid account of the fighting in the streets of Rome, vi. 45-61 (English Translation). If we take the almost ten steps of Beatrice in Canto xxxiii. 16-18 as years, and count them from 1300, the ideal date of the poem, we come to 1309-10—the time when Henry may have been hesitating about coming to Italy. See p. 489.

[2] *Purg.* vi. 145-147. Napier (*Florentine History*, ii. 626) does not agree with Dante's condemnation of these changes of laws: 'A characteristic, and if discreetly handled a wise regulation of the Florentines notwithstanding Dante's sarcasms, was the periodical revision of their statutes and ordinances, a weeding out as it were of the obsolete and contradictory, and a substitution of those which were better adapted to existing circumstances and the forward movement of man.' He admits, however, that the changes were made 'sometimes factiously': probably Dante would have substituted 'generally' for 'sometimes.'

CHAPTER VII

PENITENTS OF THE LAST HOUR

IV. Worldly Princes

DANTE now resumes the narrative at the point where it was interrupted by this long and passionate apostrophe to Italy. We saw how Sordello, suddenly swept out of his haughty reserve by hearing the name of his native place, embraced Virgil as a fellow-citizen. When these salutations had been repeated three or four times, he asked: 'Who are you?'—and the great Latin poet made answer for himself:

> 'I am Virgilius; and for no sin else
> Did I lose heaven than for not having faith.'[1]

Sordello, scarce able to believe the grace vouchsafed to him in thus meeting 'the glory of the Latins,' after embracing him reverently 'where the inferior lays hold,' begs to know if he had come from the Inferno, and if so, from what 'cloister.' Whereupon Virgil described to him the Limbo of Unbaptized Infants and Heathen from which he came, and tells why it is his place in the eternal world:

> 'Not for doing, but for not doing, have I lost
> The sight of the high Sun, whom thou desirest,
> And who too late by me was known.
> A place there is below, not sad with torments,
> But with darkness only, where the lamentations
> Have not the sound of wailings, but are sighs.
> There dwell I, with the little innocents
> Bitten by the teeth of death or ever they
> Were from the human sinfulness set free.

[1] *Purg.* vii. 7, 8.

There dwell I with those who the three holy
Virtues did not put on, and without defect
The others knew, and followed all of them.'[1]

'The three holy virtues' are Faith, Hope, and Love, called theological, because they come from God and lead to God, and therefore, according to mediæval theology, could not be known by a heathen like Virgil. 'The others,' which he knew and followed, are Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude—the natural virtues which shone like stars in Cato's face.

In reply to Virgil's question about the ascent, Sordello offers to act as guide as far as he is at liberty to go —that is, of course, as far as he has experience of the penitent life. The whole of the scene which follows is obviously imitated from the Sixth of the *Æneid*, in which the Greek poet Musæus guides Æneas to the flowery valley in Elysium where the soul of his father Anchises dwelt.[2] Just as in the case of Musæus, no fixed place is assigned to Sordello; he is at liberty to go up the Mountain and around.[3] As, however, it is impossible to ascend during the night, it will be well, he thinks, to spend the dark hours in a secluded place on his right hand where are certain souls whom it will be a pleasure to them to know. Virgil is surprised at this inability to mount during the night, and begs to know the reason why. Sordello replies by drawing a line with his finger on the ground, and declaring it impossible to cross it after sunset. They could, indeed, go down but not up: because the darkness 'obstructs the will with want of power.' The allegory is obvious. Since the sun is the image of God, man can make no progress in the moral life without the illumination of His grace, for grace is the prin-

[1] *Purg.* vii. 25-36. See *Inf.* iv. for Limbo of the Heathen.

[2] *Æn.* vi. 673 ff. Compare the Flowery Valley of Purgatory in the vision of the Northumbrian who returned from the dead, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, v. 12.

[3] Vernon says Sordello was 'free to range anywhere about the lower slopes of the mountain.' Sordello himself simply says 'up and around': we may take for granted that his liberty was confined to this upper region of those lower slopes—it is not likely he was allowed to descend to the shore of the Mount.

ciple of the supernatural life of the soul, apart from which the mere natural powers can only fall back into sin.[1] Virgil, the natural Reason of man, finds it hard to understand this moral inability. The passage is, of course, the echo of Christ's words: 'Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.'[2]

A short distance brought them to a valley hollowed like a lap in the Mountain side, all grown with grass and flowers which gave forth a thousand sweet odours. There they found a company of Princes seated, singing their Compline hymn, *Salve Regina*, in the westering sun. From a path a little above the valley[3] Sordello points out and names the principal shades, from the Emperor Rudolph who sits highest, to William, Marquis of Monferrato, in the hollow beneath. From this ledge he thinks it less difficult to discriminate their acts and faces than if they were to descend among them: Dante's idea plainly being that it is easier to form a true judgment of the life of great personages at a distance:

> Gold and silver fine, scarlet and pearl-white,
> Indian wood shining and serene,
> Fresh emerald in the hour it is broken,
> By the grass and by the flowers within that bosom
> Set, each one in colour would be vanquished,
> As by its greater vanquished is the less.
> Nor in that place had Nature painted only,
> But of the sweetness of a thousand odours
> Made there one, unknown and indefinable.
> *Salve Regina*, on the green and on the flowers
> There seated, singing, spirits I beheld,
> Which were not visible outside the valley.[4]

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[1] 'Even a person who is in a state of grace and friendship with God needs a new impulse of actual grace before he can think a good thought or perform a good deed; while a special grace, which cannot be merited, is required in order that he may persevere to the end' (*Cath. Dictionary*, Art. 'Grace').

[2] John xii. 35.

[3] This is imitated from *Æn.* vi. 675-683, where Musæus shows Æneas 'the shining plains' of Elysium from a rising ground. When Anchises leads his son down among the shades, he chooses a height from which to point out the heroes of the Trojan race as they march past (ll. 752-755).

[4] *Purg.* vii. 73-84. The translation of line 74 is very uncertain. Vernon, altering the punctuation, translates: 'Azure (*indico*), wood

It is easier to see that this is allegorical than to determine the exact interpretation. It is difficult to accept Vernon's view that the grass on which the Princes sit and the flowers and odours signify 'that the constant freshness and verdure of their exploits, the sweet savour of their fame, and the splendour of their glory, live after them':[1] the exploits and fame which many of them left behind on earth were very far from being a cool sequestered vale of fair sweet-perfumed flowers. Plumptre comes much nearer when he makes *Salve Regina* the key to the allegory. It is a hymn of exiles longing for the celestial Fatherland, and 'weeping in this vale of tears.' 'Is not the thought implied that it is true of the fairest scenes of earth, of its purest joys, of the times of refreshing which are granted to the soul between its conversion and the sterner discipline which it needs, that they are not our rest, that our home is elsewhere?' This is certainly part of the truth; but we come closer to Dante's thought if we remember that the souls detained on these lower slopes of the Mountain are in some real sense still subject to temptation, and not merely to temptation in general, but to that special form of temptation which was their besetting sin on earth. The Excommunicate, for example, are still entangled in their old contumacy; the Indolent in their sloth; the Energetic in their activity. The probability surely is that Dante is here carrying out the same idea. The special temptation of princes and great ones of the earth springs, according to this view of the passage, from the beauty and splendour of their worldly life—the gold and silver and rare woods with which their palaces were adorned, their rich robes of state, their gardens and flowers and perfumes. This was what held them back from re-

brilliant and pure.' If *indico* is to be taken with *legno*, it would mean ebony, and ebony is out of place here. Butler suggests that *lucido e sereno* means 'the blue of heaven.' It would certainly be strange if blue were entirely absent. Ruskin thinks the emerald of line 75 is 'the emerald green of the illuminators: for a fresh emerald is no brighter than one which is not fresh'; to which Butler replies that 'the uncut (*fresco*) emerald is not bright, and it is not until the stone is split or flaked that the full colour is seen.'

[1] *Readings*, i. 255.

pentance on earth, and even in the new life beyond it still hangs round them as an entangling, delaying power, in accordance with Christ's own words: 'How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!'[1] The very seclusion of their valley, far withdrawn from the plebeian herd of penitents, is symbolic of the earthly pride still clinging to their souls. Though they sing a song of exiles, longing for Heaven and 'weeping in this vale of tears,' yet their hearts are still drawn downward to the earth: their very attitude is significant—they *sit* on the grass and flowers, unable to rise and leave behind for ever the old habits of their stately worldly life. One is reminded of the group of ladies and noblemen in the famous 'Triumph of Death' in the Campo Santo of Pisa. While the Black Death flies without, they are seated in a sequestered orange-grove, like the fair garden of the Decameron, absorbed in their luxuries, and unconscious of the scythe above their heads. One cannot but feel that, when the blow falls, men and women who thus clung to their earthly state to the last hour will find it no easy task to shake off the habits of a life-time and enter humbly into the kingdom of God.[2]

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by what can scarcely be an accidental contrast between this Flowery Valley at the base of the Mountain and the Flowery Garden on the top. The latter is the true Earthly Paradise which Dante in the *De Monarchia* identifies with the ideal Empire, the state of just and settled government, which it is the duty of the Emperor and his princes to create and maintain.[3] As such it is a vast table-land, with its flowing rivers, and meadows of grass and flowers, and forests of living green through whose cool glades one may wander in perfect freedom and security. It is surely in contrast to this wide Empire, this 'land of far distances,' that Dante here sets the Emperor and princes in a narrow sequestered valley

[1] Mark x. 24.

[2] Compare also the companion group of ladies and gentlemen in the great fresco of the Church in the Spanish Chapel in Florence.

[3] *De Mon.* iii. 16. See p. 374.

in the lap of the hillside. They are to learn at last how petty and insignificant was all that earthly state of which they were so proud, compared with the ideal of Empire on the Mountain-top. It is the lesson finally learnt by the souls whom Dante saw in the Heaven of Mercury. They had done great and good deeds on earth, but they did them in part for love of fame; and now they find that this vainglory, so far from making them great, as they had hoped, has set them in Mercury, the smallest of the stars.[1] This contrast between the Valley of the Princes and the Earthly Paradise is confirmed by a comparison of the spirits here with the first soul Dante meets on the summit—Matelda, the great Countess of Tuscany.[2] They can only *sit* on the grass and flowers, their very attitude, as we have seen, being symbolic of the way in which their earthly state still overpowers their better mind; whereas Matelda, who represents the Active Life, moves freely through the forest, gathering flowers and singing in her joy. On earth she too had been surrounded by the green flowery world of her great state and splendour, but she had valued it only as giving her the better opportunity of serving Christ and His Church. Hence it is that, while they sit inactive in this narrow valley of the false Earthly Paradise below, half-paralyzed by the old habit of their pride, Matelda continues her life of free and joyful service in the ideal of wide and universal Empire above. Nor can it be altogether without meaning that when, in the Heaven of Jupiter, Dante sees all righteous kings in the form of starry lights form themselves into the glowing Eagle of eternal Empire, his mind should return to the image of flowers and their fragrances, one figure penetrating another:

> O perpetual flowers
> Of the eternal joy, which as only one
> Make all your odours manifest to me.[3]

From all these considerations we see what their special sin was. It is customary to say that these

[1] *Par.* vi. 112; *Conv.* ii. 14.
[2] See p. 377.
[3] *Par.* xix. 22-24.

princes had been so much occupied with care for others in the ruling of their kingdoms, that they only remembered their own salvation in the hour of death. Doubtless this preoccupation in the cares of state existed; but that they almost lost their souls in excess of thought for others, is scarcely borne out by what Dante says of some of them. A few, indeed, such as Pedro III. of Aragon and Henry III. of England, are regarded as good men; but the Emperor Rudolph is expressly censured for neglect of his imperial duty to Italy, a neglect of which he bears the marks even in the other world;[1] and Philip III. of France who 'shamed the Lily,' and Charles of Anjou whose brutal oppression provoked the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers, can scarcely have been regarded by Dante as princes who neglected their own eternal salvation in their eagerness to secure the temporal salvation of their subjects. Such princes he would have been much likelier to set in the Heaven of Righteous Kings. At all events, in the absence of any express statement to the contrary, we cannot be far wrong in taking the Flowery Valley as symbolic of absorption, not in the cares of state, but in the state itself—the pomp and beauty and splendour of their worldly place and power. It is perhaps for this reason they are set so far up the Mountain-side. In his long exile Dante had been much dependent on this very class of nobles; and if his forefather's prophecy was fulfilled, they sometimes made their patronage bitter enough to his proud spirit:

> 'Thou shalt have proof how savoureth of salt
> The bread of others, and how hard a road
> The going down and up another's stairs.'[2]

But he bears no bitterness: he has been near enough to the temptations of great earthly station to understand their power and make due allowance for them.

Sordello now proceeds to point out and name the different princes, criticizing them and their descendants

[1] *Purg.* vii. 91-96; vi. 103-105.

[2] *Par.* xvii. 58-60. Dante always acknowledges gratefully the kindness of patrons like Can Grande and the Malaspina family.

as freely as he had done in his *Lament for Blacatz*. It is, of course, Dante's mode of pronouncing his own judgment on the political situation of his time and on the men who were chiefly responsible for bringing it about; and although the subject is involved and difficult, it is necessary to enter into it to some extent if we are to understand the new character wrought in these princes by repentance at the last hour. They are grouped together in pairs, chiefly in order to bring out the greatness of the change in their attitude to each other since the old earthly days. We saw that even those who died by violence had to forgive their murderers before they could be themselves forgiven; and the same law, of course, holds good here. Princes who on earth were sworn enemies, carrying on an implacable warfare against each other, are now sitting side by side in friendly intercourse, singing the same Christian hymn, and comforting one another during the days of their exile from their common Fatherland.[1]

The first pair are Rudolph of Hapsburg, founder of the imperial house of Austria, and Ottocar, king of Bohemia. Rudolph, says Toynbee, 'first served under Ottocar in his German wars, but in 1272, as he was encamped before the walls of Basle, he received the news that he had been elected Emperor, in preference to Ottocar and to Alphonso of Castile. Ottocar refused to acknowledge him as Emperor, but Rudolph, supported by powerful allies, made war upon him and compelled him to sue for peace, which was granted only upon condition that he should cede Austria, Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola. A few years later Ottocar again rebelled, and was finally defeated and slain near Vienna, August 1278.' It is the defeated king who is now comforting his conqueror by his looks. Rudolph, whom Dante has already reproached for his neglect of Italy, still bears in his appearance the traces of his

[1] Compare the converse of this in the case of Cæsar and Pompey in *Æn.* vi. 826 ff. Prior to their birth on earth, Æneas sees their shades in the Elysian Fields in a perfect friendship—'concordes animæ nunc'—which gave no hint of the wars with which they afterwards shook the world.

negligence; and it is perhaps on this account that he is as yet unable to join in the hymn the others sing.

The second pair are Philip III. of France and Henry I. of Navarre. The former is described as 'Nasetto,' the small-nosed, who 'died fleeing and deflowering the Lily.' The reference is to his defeat by Pedro III. of Aragon, who is one of the next pair pointed out by Sordello. Pope Martin IV. had proclaimed a Holy War against Pedro for his seizure of Sicily, and in 1285 Philip at the head of 100,000 men, 'the military scum of Europe,' marched south and besieged Gerona. The fortress fell into his hands, but his fleet being defeated and destroyed in the Gulf of Rosas by Pedro's admiral, Roger di Loria, Philip was forced to retreat to Perpignan, where he died of fever and vexation over his defeat.[1] The 'deflowering of the Lily' is probably the disgraceful way in which in this crusade he made France the tool and creature of the Papacy. Dante sees him beating his breast, while his companion, 'so benign in aspect,' sighs and rests his head sadly in his palm. They are grieving over the misdeeds of Philip the Fair, son of the one and son-in-law of the other:

> Father and father-in-law of the Woe of France
> Are they, and know his life iniquitous and foul,
> And hence comes the grief that so doth pierce them.[2]

The third pair are perhaps the most interesting of the entire company, Pedro III. of Aragon, 'who appears so stalwart,' and Charles I. of Anjou, 'of the manly nose.' No two men could have been a greater contrast in Dante's mind. Pedro he describes as 'girt with the cord of every worth'; he was indeed, as one historian says, 'a patriot king, a faithful knight, a man brave and merciful, constant and true, one of the few mediæval sovereigns whom we can honestly admire, and who is

[1] Villani's *Chronicle*, vii. 105. The year 1285 was a fatal one for several of the chief men of the time. Charles of Anjou died in January; Pope Martin IV. in March; Philip III. in October; and Pedro of Aragon in November. The three kings are here in the Valley of the Princes, the Pope is on the Terrace of Gluttons (*Purg.* xxiv. 20-24). See p. 321.

[2] *Purg.* vii. 109-111. For other references to Philip the Fair, see *Purg.* xx. 91, 'the new Pilate'; xxxii. 152, the 'Giant' who sins with the Harlot Church; and *Par.* xix. 120, where his death is foretold.

not undeserving of the surname of Great.'[1] We know Dante's opinion of his companion, Charles of Anjou. Summoned to Italy as the champion of the Papacy against the Hohenstaufens, he had slain Manfred at Benevento, and stained his honour by executing on the public scaffold in Naples as a common criminal and a rebel the last of the race, Conradin, a mere boy in years. Dante accuses him also of the murder of St. Thomas Aquinas.[2] His unspeakable cruelties in Sicily goaded the down-trodden people into the great massacre known as the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, when almost every Frenchman in the island was put to death. Pedro of Aragon seized Sicily in the name of his wife Constance, daughter of King Manfred, and Charles never regained it in spite of the most frantic efforts.[3] In a frenzy of anger he challenged his rival to mortal combat in the lists at Bordeaux. The challenge was accepted but never fought; it ended, says Milman, 'in a pitiful comedy, in which Charles of Anjou had the ignominy of practising base and disloyal designs against his adversary; Peter, that of eluding the contest by craft, justifiable only as his mistrust of his adversary was well or ill grounded, but much too cunning for a frank and generous knight.' Death brought their rivalries and hatreds to an end in the same year, 1285. Remembering Dante's judgment of the Angevin usurper, it is certainly a surprise to find him here on his way to Paradise. 'Here, again,' as Dr. Moore says, 'Dante shows his strict and impartial justice towards one whom he deeply hated, and whom, no doubt, he would have "delivered over to Satan" without overmuch

[1] Burke's *History of Spain*, i. 305. [2] *Purg.* xx. 67-69. See p. 278.

[3] For the Sicilian Vespers, see *Par.* viii. 67-75. 'One man alone was spared,' says Milman, 'William Porcelet, Governor of Calatafimi, who had ruled with justice and humanity, was, by common consent, sent safe on board ship by the Palermitans, and returned to Provence.' The rage of Charles knew no bounds. 'Now he sat silent, glaring fiercely around him, gnawing the top of his sceptre; then broke forth into the most horrible vows of vengeance: "if he could live a thousand years, he would go on razing the cities, burning the lands, torturing the rebellious slaves. He would leave Sicily a blasted, barren, uninhabited rock, as a warning to the present age, an example to the future"' (*Latin Christianity*, vi. 432, 433).

regret.'[1] Doubtless he owed his escape to the story of his repentance at the last hour as narrated by Villani: 'But before he died, with great contrition taking the Body of Christ, he said with great reverence these words: "Sire Dieu, comme je crois vraiment que vous êtes mon Sauveur, ainsi je vous prie, que vous ayez merci de mon âme; ainsi comme je fis la prise du royaume de Cicile plus pour servir sainte Eglise que pour mon profit ou autre convoitise, ainsi vous me pardonniez mes péchés"; and a short time after he passed from this life.'[2]

The last two princes named are not coupled together, as in the previous cases.

> 'Behold the King of the simple life,
> Henry of England, sitting there alone.'[3]

This is Henry III., set apart from the rest, like Saladin, probably because his territory lay outside the Empire. Villani also speaks of him as 'a man of simple life,' the reference in both cases probably being to his reputation for piety.[4] In his *Lament for Blacatz* Sordello had not been so lenient to him as he is now, upbraiding him for his pusillanimity in not recovering the Angevin possessions which his father had lost: the only thing that

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 290.

[2] *Chronicle*, vii. 95. Ruskin's translation of Villani's description of Charles (vii. 1) is worth quoting: 'And this Charles was wise, and of sane counsel; and of prowess in arms, and fierce, and much feared and redoubted by all the kings in the world;—magnanimous and of high purposes; fearless in the carrying forth of every great enterprise; firm in every adversity; a verifier of his every word; speaking little,—doing much; and scarcely ever laughed, and then but a little; sincere, and without flaw, as a religious and catholic person; stern in justice, fierce in look; tall and nervous in person, olive coloured, and with a large nose, and well he appeared a royal majesty more than other men. Much he watched, and little he slept; and used to say that so much time as one slept, one lost; generous to his men-at-arms, but covetous to acquire land, signory, and coin, come how it would, to furnish his enterprises and wars: in courtiers, servants of pleasure, or jocular persons, he delighted never' (*Val d'Arno*, § 240).

[3] *Purg.* vii. 130, 131.

[4] *Chronicle*, vii. 39. 'When Henry, father of the good Edward, was reigning in England, he was a man of simple life, so that the barons held him for nought.' See also v. 4, 'a simple man, and of good faith, and of little valour' (or 'worth').

could give him the necessary courage would be the eating of the heart of Blacatz:

> Fain would I see the English King upon it fare,
> Who then a stouter heart within his breast would bear,
> To win the land, whose loss his honour does impair,
> The land that for his sloth the French as theirs declare.[1]

Strange to say, it is just this recovery of his foreign possessions which Green declares to be the only political passion of which Henry was capable. His estimate of him is very far from the 'simple life' in which Dante sums up his character: 'From the cruelty, the lust, the impiety of his father he was absolutely free. But he was utterly devoid of the political capacity which had been the characteristic of John, as of his race. His conception of power lay in the display of an empty and profuse magnificence. Frivolous, changeable, impulsive alike in good and evil, false from sheer meanness of spirit, childishly superstitious, we can trace but one strong political drift in Henry's mind, a longing to recover the Continental dominions of his predecessors, to surround himself, like them, with foreigners, and without any express break with the Charter to imitate the foreign character of their rule.'[2] Obviously Dante's 'simple life' must be taken with considerable qualifications.

The last prince pointed out by name is the unfortunate Marquis of Monferrato, William VII., surnamed 'Longsword.' He is seated the lowest of the company, as being their inferior in rank. In 1290 in the attempt to put down the revolt of one of his cities, Alessandria, he was taken prisoner and 'placed in an iron cage, in which he died (February 6, 1292), after having been exhibited like a wild beast for seventeen months.'[3] It was in this cage that his final repentance must have been made. To avenge his death, his son Giovanni made an unsuccessful attack on Alessandria, which retaliated by

[1] *Lives of the Troubadours*, by Ida Farnell, p. 229.
[2] *Short History of the English People*, pp. 139, 140.
[3] Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, p. 293.

the war which, as Dante says, 'made Monferrato and the Cavanese weep.'

Into his estimate of these princes Sordello manages to weave a severe criticism of their descendants, and a curious suggestion concerning the doctrine of heredity, a subject in which Dante was greatly interested. Almost without exception the sons are declared inferior to their fathers. Ottocar in swaddling-clothes was better than his son Wenceslaus as a bearded man, consumed in lust and ease.[1] The father and father-in-law of Philip the Fair confer sadly over the iniquities of that 'Woe of France'; just as, on the Terrace of Avarice above, Hugh Capet, the founder of the house, says in sorrow:

> 'I was the root of that malignant plant
> Which overshadows all the Christian world,
> So that good fruit is seldom plucked from it.'[2]

Then three sons of Pedro of Aragon are referred to. He was succeeded in Aragon by Alphonso, and in Sicily by James. Unfortunately, Alphonso died in 1291, after a short reign of five years; had he lived, says Sordello, his father's virtue would have passed 'from vase to vase.' He points out the spirit of the young king sitting behind his father. Far otherwise was it in the case of his brothers, James and Frederick: they possessed the realm, indeed, but not 'the better heritage' of their father's virtue. 'James,' as Dr. Moore says, 'was guilty of a "gran rifiuto" by which he earned most deservedly the scorn and condemnation of the poet.'[3] On the death of Alphonso, he left Sicily under his brother Frederick as viceroy, and ascended the throne of Aragon. In 1295 by a treaty with Boniface VIII., he abandoned all his claims to Sicily in favour of Charles the Lame, King of Naples and Anjou, to whose daughter Blanche he was betrothed, after breaking off his marriage with Isabella of Castile. This was a double treachery: to his brother Frederick

[1] In *Par.* xix. 126, Dante says Wenceslaus 'never knew worthiness, nor willed it.'

[2] *Purg.* xx. 43-45.

[3] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 297.

whose rights he thereby bartered away; and to the Sicilians whom he thus basely consigned to the hated Angevin tyranny from which they had with such difficulty escaped. The indignant Sicilians[1] raised Frederick to the throne; and after some fighting with his brother of Aragon and Charles, his right was finally acknowledged under the title of 'King of Trinacria.'[2] 'But it is very singular,' as Dr. Moore says, 'that he also terminated his strife with Charles, in 1302, by a base compact very similar to that which had been made by his brother James a few years before. He then married another daughter of Charles (Eleanor), but, instead of abandoning his kingdom, he agreed that *at his death* it should return to the Angevins, thus securing at any rate his own personal interests, and no doubt consoling himself (like Hezekiah) by the thought, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?"'[3]

The son of Charles of Anjou, Charles the Lame, King of Naples, is next referred to in words which seem so needlessly mysterious that one is impatient of the involved discussions to which they have given rise:

> 'The plant is as inferior to its seed
> As, more than Beatrice and Margaret,
> Costanza boasteth of her husband still.'[4]

The simplest and most relevant interpretation appears to be this. The 'plant' is Charles the Lame, and the 'seed' his father, Charles of Anjou, who married in succession Beatrice of Provence and Margaret of Burgundy. The Costanza referred to is the wife of Pedro III. The meaning, therefore, in spite of the intricate form of

[1] One of the Sicilian ambassadors, Cataldo Ruffo, upbraided him bitterly in the presence of his court and his bride: 'Oft times have we heard, Sir King, of vassals who have deserted their lord, but never have we heard of a lord who has abandoned his vassals' (Burke's *History of Spain*, i. 308).

[2] *Par.* viii. 67.

[3] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 298; Is. xxxix. 8.

[4] *Purg.* vii. 127-129. Another interpretation takes Margaret to be the eldest daughter of Raymond Berenger IV., Count of Provence, wife of Louis IX. of France, thus ranking Louis also as Pedro's inferior. This 'rather gratuitous back-handed cut at St. Louis,' as Dr. Moore calls it, is certainly not impossible; but it is surely much simpler to suppose that 'Beatrice and Margaret' refers to the two wives of Charles of Anjou.

the passage, is the very simple one that Charles the Lame is as inferior to his father Charles of Anjou, as he in his turn is inferior to Peter of Aragon. This Charles the Lame was a man for whom Dante had a supreme contempt. In a corresponding passage of the *Paradiso*, in which he passes judgment on contemporary Christian kings, he says:

> 'There shall be seen the Cripple of Jerusalem,
> His goodness represented by an I,
> While the reverse an M shall represent.'[1]

In short, the only sovereign here who is fortunate in his descendants is 'the King of the simple life,' Henry III. of England:

> 'He in his branches hath a better issue.'

The reference is to Edward I., who appears to have been regarded throughout Europe as the beau idéal of a king. Villani speaks of him as 'the good and worthy King Edward, who was one of the most valiant lords and wise of the Christians of his time.'[2]

This problem of heredity, and in particular why virtues do not descend from father to son, is one which seems to have had a great fascination for Dante's mind, if we are to judge by the frequency with which he recurs to it. Here he finds the solution in the very source and nature of virtue. If it were a mere natural and, so to speak, physical quality, it might be poured mechanically from 'vase to vase,' without any intervention of the will; but, inasmuch as it is a thing to be gained only from God, and never without our own personal choice, we can get it only by asking it from Him:

[1] *Par.* xix. 127-129. For contemptuous references to Charles II. and Frederick II. of Sicily, see *Conv.* iv. 6; *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 12.

[2] *Chronicle*, viii. 90. Villani's note about Scotland is interesting. Edward, he says, 'was completely lord of the island of Ireland, and of all the good lands of Scotland, save that his rebel Robert the Bruce (*Ruberto di Busto*), having made himself King of the Scots, was driven with his followers to the woods and mountains of Scotland.'

'Not oftentimes upriseth through the branches
The probity of man: and this He wills
Who gives it, that from Him it may be claimed.'[1]

In the Eighth Canto of the *Paradiso*, he propounds the same question, and finds the answer in the nature of Society. For its very existence and preservation Society needs men of different gifts—legislators, soldiers, priests, and so on. If Nature had an absolutely free hand and worked on mechanically, she would produce every man in the exact image of his father, and the variety necessary for Society could not exist. Hence a higher power intervenes: the wheel of Nature, the spheres in their revolutions, stamp men as with God's own seal with the different powers which make social life possible. Dante, strange to say, does not seem to see that this is another problem altogether. It may account for the difference of natural powers, but not of virtues. To explain why one is born a lawgiver and another a soldier is certainly not the same thing as to explain why one is born with a bias to virtue and another with a love of vice.

[1] *Purg.* vii. 121-123. Longfellow reminds us of Chaucer's reference to these words in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*:

Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,
That highte Dant, speken in this sentence,—
'Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse
Wole that of hym we clayme our gentillesse;
For of oure eldres may we no-thyng clayme,
But temporel thyng that man may hurte and mayme.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE NIGHT-SERPENT OF THE FLOWERY VALLEY

THE Eighth Canto begins with a description of the evening hour almost more beautiful than that of the dawn with which the *Purgatorio* opens. A stanza in Byron's *Don Juan* is a very close translation:

> Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
> Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
> When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
> Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way,
> As the far bell of vesper makes him start,
> Seeming to weep the dying day's decay. (iii. 108.)

The mere descriptive beauty of the passage, however, is by no means its only claim on the universal admiration it has gained. The pathos and loveliness within the form can be understood only when we remember the way in which the poet makes the tender pensive feeling of the evening hour suggest the yearning of these exiled spirits for their Fatherland. For the description is suffused with the emotion of 'the new pilgrim'—the exile whose heart melts with love and longing when he hears far across the darkening sea the *Ave Maria* bell,[1] and remembers the dear friends to whom he has that day said Adieu. Doubtless it is a reminiscence of some evening on the sea in the homeless wanderings of Dante's own exile. But it is more. These souls were also exiles. Just a little before he had heard them sing the *Salve Regina*, a vesper song of exiles yearning for their true home and Fatherland. It is in

[1] Dante's word is *squilla*, a hand bell, which, says Durandus, 'by its sharp sound signifieth Paul preaching acutely'—bells being symbolic of preachers. Rung in the night they signify, 'Wake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead' (*Symbolism of Churches*, p. 76).

the soft twilight hour that the eternal love and longing wake and melt the heart with tenderness.

The longing finds expression through one of the spirits who, with clasped uplifted hands, and gazing with rapt eyes towards the sacred East, sings the Compline hymn, *Te lucis ante*, with such surpassing sweetness that it made Dante, to use his own words, 'issue forth out of his mind.'[1] The singer is probably his own friend, Nino Visconti, with whom he holds converse a little later; and then the other spirits join in and sing the hymn to the end, every eye uplifted to 'the supernal wheels.'

At this point, Dante interrupts his narrative with one of those notes by which he occasionally draws the reader's special attention to the allegory he is about to set before him:

> Here, Reader, sharpen well thine eyes to the truth,
> For the veil is now indeed so thin
> That surely to pass within is easy.[2]

This certainly seems to mean that the allegory is transparent and obvious, but commentators have not found it so, if we are to judge by the multitude of interpretations it has received. No suggestion, however, can be offered until the entire passage has been examined. The outline of the narrative is as follows. While 'the noble army' of spirits, pale and humble, gaze up in expectation, the prayer of their hymn is answered by the descent of two Angels with flaming swords, who take up their stations one on each side of the valley. Sordello explains that their work is to guard against the Serpent which will presently appear. Meantime at his suggestion they descend 'only three steps' into the valley.[3] There Dante meets his friend Nino, who in amazement to find him still alive calls his companion, Currado Malaspina, to come and see this miracle of

[1] *Purg.* viii. 15. [2] *Purg.* viii. 19-21.

[3] The 'three steps' doubtless have a symbolic meaning, but it is difficult to say what—whether it is connected with the three steps of St. Peter's Gate, or the three stars of the theological virtues which immediately appear.

Divine grace. Nino begs for the prayers of his daughter Giovanna, her mother having married again and forgotten him. Suddenly Dante's eye is caught by the blaze of 'the three torches' of the theological virtues in the Southern sky; and it is while he is gazing at them 'with hungry eyes' that the Serpent comes gliding in among the grass and flowers. One sudden downward swoop of the Angels' wings and he is gone. Then follows a conversation in which Conrad Malaspina promises the poet the hospitality of his house ere seven years pass by.

Let us now examine the narrative in detail, and then gather the meaning of the allegory to which Dante so pointedly calls our attention. The two conversations are interesting on account of the personal references they contain to the poet himself. From the 'fair greetings' which pass between the two, it is obvious that Nino and he had been friends on earth. It has been suggested that they were companions in arms at the siege of Caprona in 1289,[1] but, as Toynbee says, 'it is as likely that they met in Florence itself, where Nino was present several times in 1290 in the interests of the Guelph league against Pisa.' Dante is overjoyed to find him here: he had had doubts of his salvation:

> Noble Judge Nino, how it me delighted
> When I beheld thee, not among the damned![2]

This Nino was a member of the noble family of the Visconti of Pisa, and had been head of the Guelph party in that city. He held the office of Judge or Governor of the Province of Gallura in Sardinia, an island which then belonged to the Pisans. Driven out of the city in 1288 by his grandfather, the famous Count Ugolino, whom Dante saw in the ice of Antenora, Nino joined the Guelph league of Genoa, Lucca, and Florence, and fought against his native city for the next five years. It can hardly be for this that Dante had doubts of his salvation, when we remember how violently he himself urged Henry VII. to besiege Florence.[3] There is something very pathetic in the father begging for the

[1] *Inf.* xxi. 94-96. [2] *Purg.* viii. 53, 54. [3] *Epistle* vii.

prayers of his little daughter of nine, because her mother had forgotten him:

'By that especial grace
Thou owest unto Him who so concealeth
His own first wherefore that it hath no ford,
When thou shalt be beyond the waters wide,
Say to my Giovanna that she pray for me,
Where answer to the innocent is made.
I do not think her mother loves me more,
Since she has laid aside her wimple white,
Which she, poor soul, must long for yet again.
Through her full easy 'tis to understand
How long in woman lasts the fire of love,
If eye or touch do not relight it oft.
The Viper the Milanese wears on his shield
Will not make for her a sepulture
So fair as would have made Gallura's Cock.'
In this wise spake he, with the stamp impressed
Upon his aspect of that righteous zeal,
Which in due measure in his heart doth burn.[1]

Nino's widow was Beatrice d'Este, and in 1300, four years after his death, she was married to Galeazzo Visconti of Milan. It is difficult to understand why Nino is so indignant, or why Dante should be so careful to impress on us that his indignation was righteous, especially when we remember Cato's utter indifference to his wife Marcia in Limbo. There is something ludicrous in the warning that the new coat-of-arms will not look so well on her sepulchre as the old would have done: what woman ever yet was kept back from marriage by the thought of how her tomb would look? Probably Dante had two reasons for putting this speech into Nino's mouth. In the first place, it reveals how much of the old aristocratic pride still clings to his heart: here on his way to Paradise itself he cannot admit that the Milanese Viper is equal to his own armorial bearings, even on a tomb. The second reason is probably connected with the Roman Catholic feeling against second marriages. They are not, indeed, regarded as unlawful, but the Church set upon them one definite mark of disfavour—the withholding of the

[1] *Purg.* viii. 67-84.

nuptial benediction. In Dante's time the custom seems to have varied in different places. In our own day this mark of disapproval, strange to say, is set upon the woman: 'the present rubric permits the nuptial benediction except when the woman has been married before.' Parallel to this is Virgil's condemnation of second marriages in the Fourth of the *Æneid*, which Dante accepts. In *Inf.* v. 62, he speaks of Dido as she 'who broke faith with the ashes of Sichæus'; and in *Par.* ix. 98, her love of Æneas is regarded as a wrong both to Creüsa, his wife who perished in the flames of Troy, and to Sichæus, her own dead husband. It is difficult otherwise to account for Nino's anger at his widow marrying four years after his death, and while still a young woman; and even these considerations do not make it easy to agree with Dante that his 'zeal' was either 'righteous' or 'in due measure.'[1]

Nino, as we have seen, was a Guelph, and the soul to whom he called on discovering that Dante was still in the flesh, was a Ghibelline; but here no faction can divide spirit from spirit. This shade was so absorbed in gazing at Dante that he took no notice of the retreat of the Serpent before the Angels. The fact is that the sight of Dante brought back his old besetting sin of earth—an excessive care of his family:

> 'To mine own I bore the love which here is purified.'[2]

The old love returns, and he begs eagerly for news of the Val di Magra, where the territory of the family lay.[3]

[1] The reason for this disapproval of the Church is connected by Durandus with the sacramental symbolism of marriage as representing the union of Christ and the Church. A second marriage destroys this symbolic oneness, 'wherefore marriage should not advance beyond *one*, because such advance cannot signify unity.'

[2] *Purg.* viii. 120.

[3] The words in which Conrad adjures Dante for news are a good example of the poet's method of working out the meaning of Scripture:

> 'So may the lamp that leadeth thee on high
> Find in thy will as much of wax
> As needful is even to the enamelled summit.'

The word *lucerna*, lamp, shows that he was thinking of Prov. xx. 27, which reads in the Vulgate: 'Lucerna Domini spiraculum hominis,' 'The spirit of man is the candle (R.V. lamp) of the Lord.' Dante's idea is not, therefore, as so often stated, that the lamp of Divine grace leads him up

In reply Dante praises his house in a way which can scarcely have helped him in his repentance. Though he had never been in his domains, yet who in all Europe did not know his house and land?

> 'And I swear to you, so may I go on high,
> Your honoured race doth not disrobe itself
> Of the glory of the purse and of the sword.
> It is so privileged by use and nature,
> That though a guilty head do twist the world,
> Sole it goes straight, and scorns the evil way.'[1]

Whereupon Conrad replies that before seven years pass by, 'this courteous opinion' shall be nailed in his head by stronger nails than the reports of others: in plain words, Dante would himself have experience of the hospitality of the Lords of Lunigiana. The episode is simply the poet's way of showing his gratitude for that hospitality. According to Boccaccio, it was to Moroello Malaspina, cousin of this Conrad, that Dante dedicated the *Purgatorio*, but there is no other proof of this. In 1765 two documents were discovered in Sarzana which show that the poet was in reality the guest of another cousin, Franceschini, and that he acted as his 'legitimate procurator, steward, agent, and envoy extraordinary' in what must have been to Dante most congenial work —the arrangement of a treaty of peace between the Malaspina family and the Bishop and Count of Luni. Dante, on behalf of the Marchesi Malaspina, 'made and granted to the aforesaid Venerable Father a true and perpetual peace, in regard to all and each of the aforesaid and any excesses or offenses whatsoever; and in sign of a true and everlasting peace the Lord Bishop and the aforesaid Dante kissed each other in turn.' 'It is impossible,' says Vernon, 'to overestimate the value of the discovery of these two documents, throwing, as

the Mountain. It is his own spirit which is 'the lamp of the Lord,' lighted of course by God's grace to guide him through the night which is just falling; and what Conrad prays for is that the candle burning within the lamp may find *in Dante's own will* wax sufficient to feed the flame until he reach 'the enamelled summit.'

[1] *Purg.* viii. 127-132. The 'guilty head' is variously interpreted as Devil, Emperor, Pope. Perhaps Dante would be quite willing that we take our choice.

they do, a ray of strong light into the obscurity of Dante's life after his exile, and giving such evident proofs that he was held to be a person of capacity, judgment, and worthy of trust.'[1]

We are now in a position to examine the allegory, which obviously circles round the question of Temptation. Are the spirits in this valley still subject to temptation, and if so, how far and in what sense? The answer seems to be contained in the Compline hymn, *Te lucis ante*, which they have just sung. The essential thing to note is that it is a prayer for protection, not from temptation in general, but from temptation in the dreams and visions of the night. The hymn is familiar to us in the version beginning, 'Before the ending of the day,' but Cardinal Newman's rendering, not being so well known, may be quoted:

Now that the daylight dies away,
By all Thy grace and love,
Thee, Maker of the world, we pray
To watch our bed above.

Let dreams depart and phantoms fly,
The offspring of the night,
Keep us, like shrines, beneath Thine eye,
Pure in our foe's despite.

This grace on Thy redeemed confer,
Father, Co-equal Son,
And Holy Ghost, the Comforter,
Eternal Three in One.

The question has been much discussed whether souls in Purgatory are regarded by Dante as still subject to temptation. There is no doubt that, according to the teaching of Aquinas and the Church generally, they are not. St. Thomas expressly says: 'Those who are in Purgatory are superior to us in respect of their impeccability,'[2] and it is assumed that here, as elsewhere, Dante follows his master in Theology. Scartazzini

[1] Latham's *Dante's Eleven Letters*, p. 88; Vernon's *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 320. According to Boccaccio, it was while Dante was a guest of the Malaspina family that the first seven Cantos of the *Inferno* were found by his friends in Florence, and forwarded to the Marquis Moroello.

[2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. lxxxiii. a. 11.

quotes with approval Cesari's view that it is not temptation to which these spirits are exposed, but fear; and to this interpretation a recent commentator gives vivid and striking expression: 'Allegorically interpreted, the serpent represents temptation (cp. l. 99, "the serpent that tempted Eve"), and the angels are the heavenly influences which succour the tempted; the place (the Flowery Valley) signifies the splendour of kingly courts, and the time (nightfall) suggests a special time of temptation, in which way night is regarded in Scripture and in the services of the Church, *e.g.* in the prayer, "Lighten our darkness," etc. Thus the whole occurrence becomes a periodical rehearsal before the Princes of their experiences in life—the grandeur of their state, the temptations to which they were exposed, and their deliverances from them. It is an acted parable, resembling a scene in a drama, only much more vivid and real. The fear which the spirits feel while it passes before them does not arise from any actual dread of temptation, but is like the shudder which comes over us at the recollection of a terrible experience. There is no reason for supposing that in Ante-Purgatory, any more than in Purgatory itself, there was any liability to temptation; throughout the whole poem the power to commit sins, and consequently probation, is regarded as coming to an end with death.'[1] This is strikingly expressed, but it is difficult to believe that Dante did not mean something much more real than a kind of dramatic 'rehearsal' of old experiences. We must remember that these souls are not yet inside the gate of Purgatory proper. Ante-Purgatory is a creation of Dante's own imagination, and even if the spirits who are detained in it are still subject to temptation, this would be no contradiction of the doctrine of the Church. It appears to be part of the pain of all the souls upon these lower slopes that something of the power of old sinful habit still clings round them; and it is only of those within the gate that we have a clear and definite statement that all liability to temptation is past. We

[1] Rev. H. F. Tozer's *English Commentary*, p. 236.

shall see that when the souls on the Terrace of Pride repeat the petition of the Lord's Prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,' they immediately add:

> 'This last petition, verily, dear Lord,
> Not for ourselves is made, who need it not,
> But for their sake who have remained behind us.'[1]

It is, of course, possible, as many hold, that those 'who have remained behind' are only those still living upon earth, but in the absence of anything to indicate this, it seems natural to include these souls in the Ante-Purgatory. But the range of their temptation is greatly narrowed: it is restricted *to their dreams.* In other words, sin has retreated to its last stronghold, as an outlaw flees to the fastnesses of the woods and mountains—the dim untravelled world of sleep where the will cannot follow. For it is a curious psychological fact that temptations which are absolutely powerless during the waking hours appear to gain control of the imagination in sleep. Hence, for instance, Milton represents the serpent as insinuating the first temptation in the obscure and subtle form of a dream, when the will is off guard:

> Him there they found
> Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
> Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams.[2]

There is a passage in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine which was doubtless well known to Dante and may well have been in his mind: 'But still there live in my memory (of which I have spoken so much) the images of such things as my habits have fixed there; and these rise up before me, lacking indeed their old power, when I am awake; but in sleep they present themselves not only so far as to call forth pleasure but also consent, and very like reality. Yes, so far has the illusion of the image power over my soul and flesh, that, when asleep, imaginations carry with them more force than realities

[1] *Purg.* xi. 22-24. Comp. xxvi. 130-132. [2] *Par. Lost*, iv. 799-803.

when I am awake. Am I not at that time myself, O Lord my God? And yet how great difference is there between myself and myself, in the moment when I pass from waking to sleeping, or return from sleeping to waking!'[1] But in truth, Dante needed no St. Augustine to teach him this: as Plumptre says, he 'wrote out of the fulness of his own experience of the night-troubles of the soul in the earlier stages of conversion.' Dante's dreams form one of the most peculiar characteristics of this Cantica. Each of the three nights he spent in Purgatory he had a dream. For the most part they are holy and helpful; but in that which came when he was on the threshold of sins of the flesh, a Siren sang so sweetly that he could scarcely turn his thoughts away from her.[2] In short, as we shall see, Dante regarded good dreams as a means of grace, according to the words: 'your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams';[3] but in the passage before us he is thinking of evil dreams and their retarding power. Sin, as already said, retreats to the world of sleep as its last stronghold, and there entrenches itself long after its power is broken in the waking life. This appears to be the allegory to which the reader's attention is so pointedly drawn; and if so, it would explain the apparent contradiction. So far as their waking, daylight life is concerned, these spirits are, indeed, above temptation; but it is part of their punishment that their old habits of evil have power even here to pursue and waylay them in dreams and visions of the night, unless they place themselves by prayer under the protection of heavenly powers. According to Aquinas, such dreams are not necessarily sins, since they occur in the sleeping state when 'reason has not a free judgment'; but they contract moral guilt when they spring

[1] *Confessions*, x. 30. In his poem 'Dreams,' beginning

> Oh! miserable power
> To dreams allow'd, to raise the guilty past,

Newman finds a moral use for them in the humility they create by reminding the soul of what it is and 'whence its wealth has come' (*Verses on Various Occasions*, lxxii.).

[2] *Purg.* xix. 16 ff.

[3] Joel ii. 28, 29; Acts ii. 17, 18.

from sins which precede and suggest them. Among the exterior causes of evil dreams he expressly names the agency of demons.[1]

While the spirits, 'pale and humble' with the fear of this last taint of sin, gaze upward in expectation of an answer to the prayer of their hymn, Dante sees descend from on high

> Two Angels with two flaming swords,
> Truncated and deprived of their points.[2]

Stationing themselves one on each side of the valley, they sweep down and drive away the Serpent the moment he appears. The description of them is symbolic in every detail. They come, says Sordello, 'from Mary's bosom,' which may mean, as some think, the snow-white Rose of Paradise over which Mary presides, every petal of which is a soul redeemed, ministered to by the angelic host.[3] Whatever the precise meaning, we may here take the opportunity of pointing out the great reverence paid to Mary all up the Mountain. One cry to her *in articulo mortis* snatches the soul of Buonconte from its evil angel. The souls of Princes in this valley sing *Salve Regina*, thus acknowledging her celestial Queenship. On every Terrace of the Mount some virtue of the Virgin is set before the penitents as the first and highest example of it. This high reverence is given her as the woman chosen of God to be the Mother of Christ, 'the Rose in which the Word Divine became incarnate.'[4] Without Him there had been no purgatorial pathway to Paradise. Even the Old Testament saints had to remain in Limbo until He 'descended

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xcv. a. 6; q. cliv. a. 5. In the latter passage Aquinas quotes a couplet of the *Te lucis ante* hymn:

> Hostemque nostrum comprime,
> Ne polluantur corpora,

and says it ought to be sung in the evening as a protection against the nocturnal suggestions of demons.

[2] *Purg.* viii. 26, 27. Comp. *Par. Lost*, iv. 776 ff.—the descent of the Cherubim as the night-watch of the Garden of Eden.

[3] *Par.* xxx-xxxiii.

[4] *Par.* xxiii. 73.

into Hell.' It was she, therefore, who closed the wound which the first mother made.[1]

The colours of the Angels are, of course, symbolic. Dante is not yet pure enough to bear the brightness of their faces: all he is able to discern is 'the blond head,' the golden hair symbolic of the sun, the image of the God from whom they came. Very beautiful too is the symbolism of the colour of their garments and their wings:

> Green as the little leaflets just now born
> Were they in raiment, which by their green wings
> Beaten and blown about, they trailed behind.[2]

No words could more vividly describe the rushing movement: we can see the waving of the garments in the wind behind, smitten by every stroke of the swift wings, in their eagerness to protect and save. The colour is, of course, the familiar symbol of Hope. Butler draws attention to the parallel passage, *Inf.* ix. 37-63, where the Furies who summon Medusa to petrify Dante into despair are, 'by a kind of infernal parody, "girt with greenest snakes."' Even there the colour retains its symbolic significance,—the only *hope* of the lost is in despair. The comparison of the angelic garments to the newborn buds of spring, however, gives a peculiar beauty and suggestiveness to the Hope of Purgatory. In the *Inferno* Dante compares the souls of the lost as they fling themselves into Charon's boat to autumn leaves which flutter down one by one until the branch is bare. For such dead leaves there is no hope of any return of spring. But it is just this which constitutes the special and peculiar quality of the Hope of penitent souls. As the buds of spring-time issue forth from the long death of winter, so are these spirits rising

[1] *Par.* xxxii. 4-6. This contrast between Mary and Eve is a favourite subject with early and mediæval theologians, in sign of which *Eva* is reversed and becomes the *Ave* of the Angel's salutation, as in the *Ave, Maris Stella* hymn:

> Sumens illud Ave
> Gabrielis ore,
> Funda nos in pace
> Mutans Evæ nomen.

[2] *Purg.* viii. 28-30.

out of the death of sin into the new life and spring-time of the soul. When the last of the Terraces is climbed and the last sin wiped away, 'the little leaflets just now born' will change into the 'dense and living green' of the 'Divine forest' on the Mountain-top; nay, Dante himself, when he drinks of Eunoë, is re-made, 'even as new plants renewed with new foliage.'[1]

The 'flaming swords, truncated and deprived of their points,' are much more difficult to explain. As we are now nearing the Gate of Purgatory, the general idea is no doubt borrowed from the Cherubim at the Gate of Eden, and the 'flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.'[2] Of the blunted swords many interpretations have been suggested, as that they are for defence, not attack; or that temptation is only scared away, not slain; or that since the atoning death of Christ, Divine justice is tempered with mercy. The difficulty of this last view is that the sword is obviously directed against the Serpent, not the penitents, and the Crucifixion surely sharpened it against him, rather than deprived it of its point. Miss Rossetti combines the two views by dividing the symbolism: the Angels descend 'with fiery swords against the lurking Serpent, with blunted swords against the reposing Elect.'[3] On the whole it seems preferable to say that the broken sword is symbolic of the broken power of the Serpent: he is no longer so formidable that the perfect sword is necessary. 'The battle is in truth already decided, the deadly thrust no longer needed, and the sword-edge alone is adequate.'[4] This would agree with our Lord's express statements that the power of Satan is now broken, if not absolutely crushed: 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven'; and 'Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.'[5] It is the fulfilment of the ancient prophecy that the seed

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 142-145. For this symbolism of colour in the Earthly Paradise, see pp. 405-409; 422; 498.

[2] Gen. iii. 24.

[3] *Shadow of Dante*, p. 111.

[4] Dr. Oelsner in Temple Classics *Purgatorio*, p. 101.

[5] Luke x. 18; John xii. 31.

of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. It is to be noticed that he does not wait even for the pointless swords:

> Hearing the green pinions cleave the air,
> The Serpent fled, and round the Angels wheeled,
> Back to their posts above flying in equal flight.[1]

The description of the Serpent and his manner of approach is full of the same symbolic interest:

> Upon that side on which the little valley
> No barrier hath, a snake there was; perchance
> Such as did give to Eve the bitter food.
> Through the grass and flowers came on the evil streak,
> Turning now and then its head towards its back,
> Licking like a beast that sleeks itself.[2]

The general conception is that of the subtle, insinuating approach, as of a creature gentle, harmless, and innocent. 'The tempter comes,' says Dean Plumptre, 'on the side where there is no rampart, the weak defenceless side of what had been the soul's besetting sin, among the green grass and flowers'—not, however, as this commentator says, 'the blameless joys of life,' but the worldly pomp of these Princes, 'gliding and licking itself as though at last it had ceased to be venomous.' We may compare Milton's description of the serpent's approach to Eve in *Paradise Lost*:

> Pleasing was his shape
> And lovely; never since of serpent kind
> Lovelier . . .
> With tract oblique
> At first, as one who sought access but feared
> To interrupt, sidelong he works his way.
> As when a ship by skilful steersman wrought
> Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind
> Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail,
> So varied he, and of his tortuous train
> Curled many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
> To lure her eye . . .
> Oft he bowed
> His turret crest and sleek enamelled neck,
> Fawning, and licked the ground whereon she trod.
> His gentle dumb expression turned at length
> The eye of Eve to mark his play.[3]

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[1] *Purg.* viii. 106-108.
[2] *Purg.* viii. 97-102.
[3] *Par. Lost*, ix. 494-528.

The obvious meaning of both passages is the apparent innocence and harmlessness of temptation, its soft, gentle, insinuating approach to the soul as of something fair to see and joyous to entertain.

Nor is it by accident that the Serpent glides thus innocently on the scene at the very moment when Dante is gazing 'with greedy eyes' at 'the three torches' which now appear near the Southern pole,

> Where slowest are the stars
> Even as a wheel the nearest to its axle.[1]

We need not seek, as is sometimes done, to identify them with any particular stars of the Southern Hemisphere. They are obviously the three theological virtues which have taken the place, as Virgil explains, of the cardinal virtues, 'the four clear stars thou sawest this morning.' In other words, the rush and glare of the day are past, the stars of the Active Life are set, those of the higher life of Contemplation have risen with the quiet twilight hour. It is just at the critical moment of transition from the one to the other that the tempter appears. Life has slackened its pace, like a wheel near the axle; it is the dangerous moment when the Active Virtues have loosened their hold and the Contemplative have not yet asserted their power. Dante, when he first heard the Adversary's name, drew himself, 'all frozen, to the faithful shoulders' of his Guide. But Reason, he knows, is not enough: in such perilous transition moments nothing avails but the aid of heavenly powers, the hawk-like sweep of 'the celestial falcons,' and the 'sword bathed in heaven.'[2]

[1] *Purg.* viii. 86, 87.

[2] Is. xxxiv. 5. In Vulg. '*inebriatus* est in cœlo gladius meus'—R.V. 'My sword hath drunk its fill in heaven.'

II

PURGATORY PROPER

Cantos IX-XXVII

Entrate; ma facciovi accorti
Che di fuor torna chi 'ndietro si guata.

C. IX. 131, 132.

Io dico pena e dovrei dir sollazzo.

C. XXIII. 72.

Della mondizia sol voler fa prova,
Che, tutta libera a mutar convento,
L'alma sorprende, e di voler le giova.

C. XXI. 61-63.

CHAPTER IX

DANTE'S FIRST DREAM: THE EAGLE

We have now arrived at the close of Dante's first day on the Mountain—Easter Sunday, which was spent in visiting the various classes of Penitents of the Last Hour. Although the Pilgrims are still in this lower division, it will be convenient to regard the dream with which this Ninth Canto opens as the true beginning and prophecy of Purgatory proper, and indeed, as we shall see, of the completed journey even to the fire of the Empyrean.

The Canto begins with a note of time so obscure that a whole library has been written on it. The amount of time and thought spent upon it is, in truth, out of all proportion to the importance of the question, which is the comparatively trivial one: when did Dante fall asleep—at the moonrise on Sunday night, or the sunrise on Monday morning? Nothing whatever in the moral and religious interpretation seems to hang on the answer. The difficulty arises chiefly from the opening words:

> The concubine of old Tithonus now
> Was whitening at the balcony of the east,
> Forth from the arms of her sweet paramour.[1]

Our first thought is naturally that the reference is to Aurora, the Dawn; but several things make us pause. First of all, the words 'concubine' and 'paramour' are peculiar. Tithonus in the myth was the husband of Aurora; and when a less honourable relation is indicated, it is very generally believed to refer to the

[1] *Purg.* ix. 1-3.

Lunar Aurora, who is regarded as his mistress. This interpretation seems to be supported by the constellation with which her brow is shining as with gems,

> Set in the figure of the cold animal
> Which with its tail doth smite the people.[1]

It is difficult to think of this as any other sign of the Zodiac than that of the Scorpion. The sign of the Fishes, which is sometimes suggested, is excluded by the reference to the smiting of the tail, and by the fact that it has no bright stars to shine like gems upon the brow. In addition there is the statement in ll. 7-9, that two of the steps by which the Night climbs were past, and the third was folding its wings. If the 'steps' are the four watches, the third would carry us on to the time of dawn; but 'the steps by which the Night *climbs*' must refer to the hours of its ascending to its climax of midnight. The meaning therefore appears to be as follows. The Aurora of the Moon was beginning to look forth like a fair woman from her balcony about the closing of the third hour of the night, a little before nine o'clock. Dante, who 'had something of Adam in him,' namely the flesh, worn out with the long climb of the previous day and night, sank into sleep on the grass of the Flowery Valley; and at the hour of dawn he had the first of the three dreams by which he was warned, encouraged, and strengthened for the climbing of the Mountain.[2]

It is worth while to pause a little to examine Dante's view of dreams, which is substantially that of his Church. They may be agents of temptation or means

[1] *Purg.* ix. 4-6. There seems to be a reference to Rev. ix. 10.

[2] Dr. Moore in his *Studies* (3rd Series, pp. 74-84) has a long and careful discussion of the passage. He lays down the principle 'that Dante, when giving indications of time by references to astronomical data, does so in such popular language and terms as would be generally understood by his readers, and that he does not take account of scientific corrections of such popular views, whether he may have had access to them or not.' He paraphrases the passage thus:—'The Aurora before moonrise was lighting up the Eastern sky (ll. 1-3); the brilliant stars of the constellation Scorpio were on the horizon (ll. 4-6); and, finally, it was shortly after 8.30 P.M. (ll. 7-9).' We must remember, however, that though Dante fell asleep thus early, his dream did not come till the morning (ll. 13-21).

of grace, according to their source. When, as in the case of many dreams in Scripture, they come from God, they are regarded as an inferior mode of revelation, given, as a rule, in a comparatively low state of spiritual knowledge. In the words of Joel (ii. 28): 'Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions,' 'it has been thought that dreams mark the decay, visions the flower of strength.'[1] As an inferior means of revelation and grace, they are appropriate to Purgatory. In the Inferno, obviously they can have no place; and the perfect holiness and vision of Paradise no longer need them. Dante regards them as a means of grace in the comparatively low moral state in which he has lived up to this time. On the Mountain-top Beatrice reproaches him for resisting her inspiration when she 'called him back in dream and otherwise,' the allusion being probably to the dreams in the end of the *Vita Nuova*. Then when he has made with tears his final confession of unfaithfulness to her, she tells him that the time for dreams is over:

'Speak no more as one who dreams.'[2]

Dante shared in the common belief of the ancients that morning dreams are prophetic of the truth, and each of the three which he has on the Mountain occurs at dawn. His belief in them is expressed in the words in which he introduces the first:

In the hour when her sad lay begins
The swallow, nigh unto the morning,
Perchance in memory of her former woes,
And when the mind of man a pilgrim
More from the flesh, and less by thoughts imprisoned,
Is in its visions as it were divine.[3]

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[1] *Catholic Dictionary*, art. 'Dreams.'

[2] *Purg.* xxx. 134; xxxiii. 33; *V.N.* 40, 43.

[3] *Purg.* ix. 13-18. The other dreams on the Mount are Cantos xix. 1 ff., and xxvii. 94 ff. All these begin with the words '*Nell' ora.*' Count Ugolino's dream (*Inf.* xxxiii. 22 ff.) was also a morning one. Tennyson has the same idea:

'on to dawn, when dreams
Begin to feel the truth and stir of day.'

The divination of dreams is spoken of in *Conv.* ii. 9. For the reference to the swallow see p. 219 on Canto xvii. 19-21.

From this it almost appears as if Dante believed, as do many savage tribes, that the soul issues forth from the body during sleep. In the *Convito* he says: 'We behold a continual experience of our immortality in the divinations of our dreams.' Such a divination is the dream before us, carrying Dante, as it does, to the fire of the highest Heaven:

> In dream I seemed to see an eagle
> Poised in the heaven, with plumes of gold,
> With his wings open, and astrain to swoop.
> And meseemed I was there where his friends
> Had been by Ganymede abandoned,
> When to the high consistory he was rapt.
> Within myself I thought, perhaps he strikes
> By custom only here, and perhaps from other place
> Disdains to bear up any in his feet.
> Then meseemed that, having wheeled a little,
> Terrible as the lightning he descended,
> And snatched me upward even to the fire.
> There it seemed that he and I did burn,
> And the imagined flame did scorch me so
> That of necessity my sleep was broken.[1]

Starting up in dismay he grew pale as a man who freezes to find everything changed. Sordello, Nino, Malaspina, were gone—Virgil alone remained. The sun was already two hours high—so much of the good light wasted. The secluded valley in which he had fallen asleep had given place to the open hillside where his face is turned to the sea. His 'Comforter' quiets his alarm. No time has yet been lost. Lucia, his patron saint, came at early dawn and carried him up to this 'good point.' Yonder is the rampart which encloses Purgatory; and that is the open entrance which she showed him with 'her beauteous eyes.' It only remained for him to 'widen all his strength,' and enter in.

The most difficult question here is: What is meant to be symbolized by the Eagle? Botta's idea that it is 'the symbol of genius' is absurdly wide of the mark: Dante knew perfectly that not his own genius, but the grace of God, could raise him to the fire of the highest Heaven. It is not easy to understand how Dr. Oelsner

[1] *Purg.* ix. 19-33.

arrives at his interpretation that it represents baptismal regeneration. 'The eagle, in the "Bestiaries,"' he writes, 'is said to fly up in his old age into the circle of fire, where he burns off all his feathers and falls blinded into a fountain of water, whence he issues with his youth renewed. This is a symbol of baptismal regeneration.'[1] What this can have to do with Dante it is hard to see, since neither he nor the Eagle falls into a fountain of water. The commonest interpretation identifies Lucia with the Eagle, and regards her as Divine grace, prevenient, illuminant, or co-operant. 'In Lucia,' says Dr. Hettinger, 'prevenient grace comes to the poet's assistance, and enables him of his own free-will to make those acts of faith, fear, hope, love, and repentance which predispose him for justifying grace, and which are beyond his natural power.'[2] Without denying such interpretations, Butler in his most interesting note on the three dreams, suggests that the Eagle is Contemplation—'the emblem from the earliest Christian times of the soul that most aspires to meditate on divine things, and as such adopted for the special "cognisance" of St. John the Divine.'[3] There is doubtless truth in this, but it appears to me to be stated too vaguely and generally, instead of being evolved from the context of Dante's feelings and situation at the moment. The Eagle *is* Contemplation, but contemplation of the Empire. Lucia *is* Divine grace, but grace working through that imperial vision.

The immediate context is the Valley of the Princes where the dream takes place. Now, that Valley represents to Dante the unideal Empire. Princes and rulers from the Emperor downwards had just been pointed out to him, who had neglected their high imperial task. Immediately before entering it he had burst out into indignant rebuke of both Pope and Emperor for this criminal neglect. It is almost impossible to believe after all this, that the Eagle of

[1] *Purgatorio* (Temple Classics), p. 114.
[2] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 152 (English Translation).
[3] *The Purgatory of Dante*, App. A., p. 424.

Dante's dream is grace or contemplation in general, and has nothing to do with the Eagle of the Empire. We must bear in mind also that Dante's dreams are prophetic, or, to use Butler's word, 'prefatory' of something to which the poet is about to move. Now, he is on the point of beginning the ascent of the Seven Terraces which lead to the Earthly Paradise on the top, and this, he has told us in the *De Monarchia* (iii. 16), is the figure of the ideal Empire upon earth. But there is also an ideal Empire beyond earth. In Jupiter, the Sixth Heaven, more than a thousand souls of Righteous Kings in the form of bright starry lights form themselves into the head and neck of the imperial Eagle. It is the heavenly ideal of Empire; and although, as he tells us, it is shown locally in the Sixth Heaven as an accommodation to human weakness, it is really nowhere else than in the Tenth Heaven, the Empyrean or Sphere of Fire.[1] With all this before our minds, it seems reasonable to suppose that the Eagle with feathers of gold which swooped down into the Valley of Negligent Princes is the heavenly and ideal Empire to which Dante is finally to rise. The vision of it is given to strengthen and encourage him in this low valley: in spite of all the neglect of their imperial duty of which these Princes had been guilty, an ideal heavenly Empire was forming itself, an Eagle with golden feathers and outspread wings, swift and terrible as the lightning, and powerful to lift men up even to the fire.[2] By means of the mere vision of it in a dream, Lucia, the prevenient grace of God, lifts the Pilgrim out of the Valley and carries him up almost to the Gate of St. Peter. If it be objected that this is

[1] *Par.* iv. 28-48; xviii. 52 ff.

[2] There is a reference in Villani's *Chronicle* (i. 40) which bears out this interpretation. Speaking of the Roman standard, he says that Augustus 'changed it, and bore the golden field and the eagle natural, to wit, in black colour, signifying the supremacy of the Empire, for like as the eagle surpasses every other bird, and sees more clearly than any other creature, *and flies as high as the heaven of the hemisphere of fire*, so the Empire ought to be above every other temporal sovereignty.' Doubtless Villani means the sphere of fire between air and moon; but Dante, regarding the Empire as more than a mere 'temporal sovereignty,' raises the Eagle to the fire of the Empyrean. See *Conv.* ii. 4.

to give to Dante's contemplation a mere political colour, the reply is that, in spite of his separation between the spheres of Pope and Emperor, he did not draw our modern line of distinction between the religious and the political. Church and Empire were two sides of the one same Kingdom of God, and their apparent separation of spheres was only for the temporary purposes of a sinful earth. Even here the antagonism should be minimized to the utmost; but in the Sixth Heaven, ruled over by the Angelic Dominations, it has no existence. Dante could not have understood if he had been told that contemplation of the ideal Empire of eternity had in it nothing spiritual or religious. It was the goal of all his highest, purest hopes.

The great lesson he had to learn here in this Valley of Negligent Princes was that this ideal Empire is still far off. He can see it indeed 'in clear dream and solemn vision'; but he is not yet able to enter in. When the Eagle snatches him up to the fire, he is so scorched that the agony awakes him, and, instead of the highest Heaven, he finds himself outside the Gate of Purgatory, with the whole long journey and purifying discipline before him. It is the idea worked out in Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*: the soul which, 'with intemperate energy of love,' begs to see Christ before it is purified, is seized and scorched and shrivelled by His 'keen sanctity,' and thereby made willing to undergo the Purgatorial pains. Just so does the burning agony of the fire of the highest Heaven reveal to Dante his great need of purification and lay him in humble self-abasement at the Gate of Purgatory,

> 'Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.'

The whole incident is intended to show also that the Divine grace can penetrate far deeper than our own conscious life and efforts. When the active powers are laid asleep, and the guidance of Reason is in abeyance, and all the ordinary means of grace fall away from the soul, even then God keeps the pathway open for the feet of His messengers. 'So He giveth His beloved in

sleep.'[1] One momentary flash of 'the fire' in a vision of the night may sometimes accomplish more for the soul than struggling hours of its own climbing, and outrun Reason's slower pace. Virgil himself gladly yields place to Lucia, the Divine grace of the dream, content to follow humbly in her footprints, and to learn from 'her beauteous eyes' the opening in the rocky rampart which lies between the soul and the next stage of the new life.[2]

> For God speaketh in one way,
> Yea in two, though man regardeth it not.
> In a dream, in a vision of the night,
> When deep sleep falleth upon men,
> In slumberings upon the bed;
> Then he openeth the ears of men,
> And sealeth their instruction,
> That he may withdraw man from his purpose,
> And hide pride from man;
> He keepeth back his soul from the pit,
> And his life from perishing by the sword.[3]

Yet these visionary moments are not unconnected with the waking life. They never come until the soul has climbed some height in the struggle against sin. Dante indicates this by confining the swoop of the Eagle of his dream to the place where he fell asleep, the Valley of the Princes:

> I thought within myself, perhaps he strikes
> From habit only here, and from other place
> Haply disdains to bear up any in his feet.[4]

'Only here' refers, as the context plainly shows, to Mount Ida in Mysia, from which Ganymede was 'caught up to the high consistory,' and where Dante imagined himself to be in his dream. Now, the mere mention of Ganymede is the poet's way of connecting his dream with the Empire. Rome was through Æneas the direct descendant of Troy; and it was from Tros, the father

[1] Ps. cxxvii. 2.

[2] St. Lucy's 'eyes' are probably the 'demonstrations' of truth which grace carries intuitively to the Reason; and they were 'beautiful' because she had plucked them out in order to remain pure (Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, ii. 613-619).

[3] Job xxxiii. 14-18.

[4] *Purg.* ix. 25-27.

of Ganymede, that Troy derived its name. The allusion therefore carries us back to the very source of the Empire, from which alone the Eagle deigns to bear up any in its feet. Translating all this into its moral equivalent, the meaning seems to be that the soul must first climb up to this Valley of the Princes where the sin of neglect of duty to the Empire is borne in upon the conscience; this, in its turn, carries the mind back to the origin of the Empire and its Divine election and purpose; and from this the soul is caught up in dream and vision to the celestial ideal of Empire, too fiery-bright for the sinful spirit yet to bear. 'Only here' and from no other place, can the vision be given.

CHAPTER X

THE GATE OF ST. PETER

THE Pilgrims are now on the very borders of Purgatory proper, and Dante quickens the reader's attention by a note in which he points the heightening of his theme:

> Reader, thou seest well how I exalt
> My matter, and therefore marvel not
> If with greater art I prop it up.[1]

The higher theme is the passing from the lower slopes where the will is half-paralyzed by old habits of evil, to the Terraces above on which the penitent soul faces its purifying discipline. The 'greater art' with which this higher theme is supported, is probably the wealth of symbolism which fills the following Cantos. Nothing, indeed, can surpass the art with which every Terrace is surveyed, measured, and mapped out, and every detail of the symbolism set in its appointed place in the routine of penitential discipline through which the soul must now pass.

From the point where Dante awoke, the opening which Lucia had pointed out in the rampart above seemed a mere crevice in the wall; but when they climbed nearer, it turned out to be a gate, with three steps of diverse colours leading up to it, and a silent Warder guarding it. 'The allegorical signification,' says Vernon, 'is that he who looks at repentance from afar, thinks the entrance much narrower and more difficult than when he has mastered his will, and really turned himself to it.'[2] But it is just as easy to read into it the opposite meaning. At a distance the difficulties of repentance are not realized; it is only when you come near that you find yourself confronted by a closed gate and a stern, inexorable Warder.

[1] *Purg.* ix. 70-72.

[2] *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 341.

This Gate stands in strong and intentional contrast to that of Hell. The latter was wide, while this is narrow; it stood open, not closed and double-locked like this; and no Porter confronted the traveller.[1] The meaning is obvious. 'Facilis descensus Averno'—nothing is easier than to sin; but when the sinner seeks to lift his feet out of the pit, he finds the very gate of mercy locked in his face, not to be opened save on fixed inexorable conditions which satisfy its stern Guardian.

This Guardian, who is in the form of an Angel, has many meanings. It is from St. Peter he holds the keys of the Gate, and therefore he represents the power of the Church to bind and loose in Heaven. At the same time, he represents the human priest-confessor, for the possibility of error of judgment which Peter attributes to him, could scarcely apply to the literal Angel.[2] From this point of view, Dante wishes to draw a picture of the ideal confessor of sinful souls. From another point of view, he is the image of the penitent sinner's own conscience, half-blinded with the face and sword of Divine justice; in the same way as the hideous demon Minos, who acts as confessor in the Inferno, is the symbol of the distorted and horrible conception of justice which is one of the principal tortures of the despairing impenitent conscience of the lost.[3]

The Angel was sitting on the threshold, and the threshold was of adamant. 'The old commentators,' says Vernon, 'all interpreted *diamante* to symbolize the firmness and constancy of the confessor; but the more modern see in it the image of the solid foundation on which the Church rests'—in accordance with the words: 'On this rock will I build my church.'[4] The probability is that Dante meant both. The attitude of the Angel is certainly symbolic. He sits on the adamantine threshold of the Church as partaking of its stern, inflexible justice; but Dante is careful to tell us that his feet rest on the topmost step, and that too must have its own symbolism. It is the step of blood-red porphyry,

[1] *Inf.* v. 20; viii. 126.
[2] *Purg.* ix. 127-129.
[3] *Inf.* v. 4-15.
[4] *Readings*, 345 n.

the deepest meaning of which is Love that pours itself out 'like blood that gushes from a vein.' The ideal confessor is one in whom are united the inflexibility of Divine Justice and the tenderness of Divine Love. This Love is shown in Peter's command to him to err, if he err at all, upon the side of mercy.

His robe is also significant in its symbolic colour:

> Ashes, or earth when it is dug out dry,
> Would be of one colour with his vestment.[1]

The exact colour of which Dante was thinking, Ruskin declares, is a whitish grey: 'Ashes necessarily mean *wood*-ashes in an Italian mind, so that we get the tone very pale; and there can be no doubt whatever about the hue meant, because it is constantly seen on the sunny sides of the Italian hills, produced by the scorching of the ground, a dusty and lifeless whitish grey, utterly painful and oppressive.'[2] Whatever the literal colour, the symbolic signifies penitence, as the mention of ashes shows. It is, indeed, difficult to think that Dante had not the ceremonies of Ash Wednesday before his mind. On this the first day of Lent, public penitents had to appear in penitential garb before the church door, just as Dante is doing here before the Gate of Purgatory. The endings, however, are different. After the bishop had sprinkled ashes on the heads of the penitents, he solemnly excluded them from the church, whereas Dante is admitted by the Angel.[3] Another symbolism, however, seems to be hinted at. As we saw, the Angel represents the ideal priest-confessor, and no priest can be this who does not himself wear the garb of penitence. Dante says pointedly that it is from under his ashen robe the confessor draws the two keys; in other words, no man who himself has not passed through the great experience of repentance is either worthy or able to use the golden key of Heaven's authority or the silver key of knowledge of how to deal with penitent souls. It is under this robe he wears the

[1] *Purg.* ix. 115, 116. [2] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. xv. § 7.

[3] This is the rite in its ancient form. In the present day, the ashes are sprinkled on the whole congregation (Smith and Cheetham's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 'Lent').

keys, and from beneath it he must draw them forth for use. No one acquainted with the workings of Dante's mind will think this too subtle a piece of interpretation. He was not prepared to admit the fitness of every priest-confessor; no man whose own soul was not clothed in the garb of penitence had or could have the keys of the new life.

The sword in the Angel's hand is variously interpreted as the righteous judgment of God, or the authority of the priest to bind and loose, or 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' This last view seems to cover the widest meaning. Dante may have had in mind the words of Scripture: 'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'[1] It is obvious how appropriate these words are here. This piercing, revealing, discerning power of the word of God is the absolutely indispensable weapon of the true ideal confessor. Dante cannot look steadfastly at its shining blade or at the face of him who wields it: the Divine word too plainly condemns his evil life, and when the point of the sword is applied, the hidden 'wounds' of sin grow suddenly visible upon his brow.[2]

As the two Pilgrims draw near, the Angel speaks no word at first, perhaps to indicate that confession cannot be thrust on any soul: if it is to be genuine, it must spring from its own spontaneous desire. Nevertheless it is he who first breaks the silence, evidently because there was something unusual in the approach of the strangers. He stops them somewhat sternly:

> 'Tell it from where you are, what is't you wish?'
> Began he to exclaim: 'Where is the escort?
> Take heed the coming upward harm you not.'[3]

[1] Heb. iv. 12, 13.

[2] *Purg.* ix. 79-84; 112-114. Comp. xxix. 139-141, where Dante fears the sword which St. Paul carries. See p. 427, 428.

[3] *Purg.* ix. 85-87.

Scartazzini thinks the question of escort indicates nothing more than that the Angel saw they were not souls for Purgatory; but it is difficult to accept this. For one thing, they *are* souls for Purgatory—at least one is, for Dante makes his confession and is admitted. For another, the words '*the* escort' plainly imply the well-known and customary escort, probably an Angel, as many writers think. 'An Angel conducts the spirits from the mouth of the Tiber to the shore of Purgatory, and we must therefore by analogy suppose that another Angel conducts them from the shore up to the gate. The Poets have come up to the gate in an unusual manner, as before this they had in an unusual manner reached the shore of the Holy Mountain. Consequently the guardians of these two places, Cato of the one, and the Angel of the other, put to them the same question.'[1] Whoever the escort may have been, the really important point is that Dante is not rejected merely because his repentance is not according to rule. When Virgil replies that a Heavenly Lady had directed them to the Gate, the Angel at once gives them hearty welcome: it is the mark of the ideal confessor that he recognizes the signs of grace in a true penitent even when he approaches him without the customary escort of the ordinary means and rules. His one anxiety is that he do not come in a spirit which will injure the soul, for an unreal repentance is more harmful than none.

At the invitation of the Angel-Confessor, Dante drew near to the three steps which led up to the threshold of adamant. 'Each stair mysteriously was meant,' as Milton says of the gate of Heaven:[2]

> There where we came, unto the first step,
> White marble was so polished and so smooth
> That I mirrored me therein such as I appear.
> The second, tinct of a deeper hue than perse,
> Was of a rock rugged and fire-scorched,
> Cracked through its length and through its breadth.
> The third, which above doth mass itself,
> Porphyry seemed to me as flaming red
> As blood which from a vein is gushing forth.[3]

[1] Vernon's *Readings*, i. 342 n. [2] *Par. Lost*, iii. 516.
[3] *Purg.* ix. 94-102. *Summa*, iii. q. xc. a. 2, 3. See Chaucer's *Parson's*

These three steps represent three of the four elements of the Sacrament of Penance: Confession, Contrition, and Satisfaction, and, I think, in this order. It is true that Aquinas reverses the order of the first two: 'contritio cordis, et confessio oris, et satisfactio operis.' It must be acknowledged too that this is the natural and psychological order, for the contrition of the heart must precede confession of the mouth in actual experience. Nevertheless the order given above seems to be that which was in Dante's mind. It is not their psychological order he is thinking of, but that in which his penitence would be revealed in the Sacrament of Penance. First would come the confession of the lips; this would lay bare the broken and contrite heart, of which the second step is the obvious symbol; and out of this would issue the satisfaction of good works. In short, Aquinas is stating the doctrine as a theologian, Dante as a penitent in the act of submitting himself to the discipline of the Church. Miss Rossetti's interpretation is as true as it is fervent: 'The triple stair stands revealed as candid Confession mirroring the whole man, mournful Contrition breaking the hard heart of the gazer on the Cross, Love all aflame offering up in Satisfaction the life-blood of body, soul, and spirit.'[1] A closer examination will confirm this view.

1. The step of Confession.[2] Before confession can be

Tale: 'Now shaltow understande what is bihovely (profitable) and necessarie to verray perfit penitence. And this stant on thre thynges: Contricioun of herte, Confessioun of mouth, and Satisfaccioun.' The fourth element of Penance is Absolution, which Dante does not receive till he has made Satisfaction, and thereby proved the sincerity of his repentance. For the change in the thirteenth century by which Absolution came immediately after Confession, and the consequent degradation of the idea of Satisfaction, see note on p. 31.

[1] *Shadow of Dante*, p. 112. She adds: 'the adamantine threshold-seat as the priceless Merits of Christ the Door, Christ the Rock, Christ the sure Foundation and the precious Corner-Stone.'

[2] Aquinas insists on the necessity of Confession: even the prelates of the Church cannot dispense a sinner from the obligation, for that would be 'to frustrate the keys': 'For sinners after Baptism there can be no salvation unless they submit themselves to the keys of the Church either by actual Confession and undergoing of the judgment of the ministers of the Church, or at least by purposing so to do with a purpose to be fulfilled in seasonable time' (*Contra Gentiles*, iv. 72). Father Rickaby's explanatory note to this passage in his translation is interesting: 'The sinner

made a man must examine himself, and therefore must have a mirror in which he can see himself as he actually is. If he wilfully keeps back one mortal sin, the whole confession is invalidated. Dante therefore represents himself as gazing into the white, polished, marble mirror of his awakened conscience, and what he sees there forms the matter of his confession before God. The whiteness represents two things—first, the candidness of the confession in the original meaning of that word, its absolute sincerity; and second, its purity. To recall old sins is often dangerous: they may only too easily stain the imagination and life afresh. But when they are recalled in sincere penitence that they may be confessed and parted with, the foul images leave no stain on the white mirror of the conscience.

2. The step of Contrition. This represents what Dante saw in the mirror, and the result of the vision. It is his own heart, and it is a heart of stone, and blacker than perse.[1] But it is now 'broken and contrite,' and scorched with the consuming fire of penitence which burns up sin. The breaking is complete and thorough: the stone, as Hettinger says, 'is split crosswise, both in length and breadth, to show that the whole inward man must be broken up and all sin repented of.'[2] The breakage in the form of the Cross can scarcely mean less than that what broke Dante's heart with contrition was the crucifixion of Christ. Or to put it in the theological formula of his Church, his repentance was *contrition*, not *attrition*. Attrition is a lower form of repentance: genuine, indeed, inasmuch as it involves a true sorrow for sin and a true purpose of amendment; but inferior as springing from some

who will not confess is guilty of a sort of contempt of court, despising the summons of his Judge and the name of his Saviour.'

[1] 'Perse is a colour mingled of purple and of black, but the black predominates, and it is called after it' (*Conv.* iv. 20). It is the colour of the Fountain of Wrath in *Inf.* vii. 103. Some derive it from the Latin *persicum*, a peach; others from *Persia*, as indigo from *Indicus*, Indian. In the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* (l. 617), the Reve is clad in 'a long surcote of *pers*.'

[2] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, 327 n. He derives *crepata*, cracked, of line 99, from 'crepacuore, a pang that breaks the heart.'

motive lower than the highest, the love and goodness of God, such as the fear of punishment or the shamefulness of sin. On the other hand, Contrition is 'that sorrow for sin which arises from consideration of God's goodness which sin has outraged.' Now God's goodness is most impressively seen in the cross of Christ, and when Dante's heart is broken in the form of that cross, it cannot mean less than that his sorrow for sin is a high and genuine contrition, which springs from no inferior motive of fear or interest, but from contemplation of the atoning love of God in Christ.[1]

3. The step of Satisfaction. According to the doctrine of the Church, Satisfaction is the payment of the temporal penalty due to sin after the eternal penalty has been remitted by God. The payment is made by means of good works which are also penal; and it is called a satisfaction because it atones for the injury done to God, as well as serves for the reformation of the sinner.[2] Dr. Moore in his informing study on 'Dante as a Religious Teacher,' points out that in this third step the poet virtually substitutes Love for the Church doctrine of Satisfaction. Not that he denied it, especially when understood as the working out of the temporal penal consequences of sin; but simply that Love threw this penal satisfaction into the background. 'Surely Dante not without purpose substituted "Love" for "Satisfaction" as the third step, not indeed denying the latter, but bringing into prominence the fact that—

foco d'amor *compia* in un punto
Ciò che dee satisfar chi qui s'astalla: (*Purg.* vi. 38, 39)

and also that "sins which were many were forgiven to

[1] In *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. i. a. 1, Aquinas takes *Contritio* in its etymological sense of grinding to powder, to bring out the completeness of the penitent's break with sin. *Attrition* is discussed in art. 3 of the same *Quæstio*.

[2] 'Dan. iv. 24 (so Heb. LXX and Vulg., "Authorised," iv. 27) is the classical passage for the doctrine that man has the power of making satisfaction for sin by good works. "Therefore, O king, let my counsel please thee, and redeem thy sins by justice, and thy perversities by showing kindness to the poor."' For the change of 'break off' (A.V.) to 'redeem,' see the reasons stated in the note to this passage, *Cath. Dict.*, 'Penance,' p. 701.

one that *loved much*" (Luke vii. 47). In other words, he associates "Satisfaction" more with the inward condition of heart than with outward acts.'[1] All this is symbolized by the porphyry

as flaming red
As blood which from a vein is gushing forth.

It is, in Miss Rossetti's words already quoted, 'Love all aflame offering up in Satisfaction the life-blood of body, soul, and spirit.' To say, as some do, that the reference is to the bloody scourgings of great penitents is to degrade the subject to that 'severity to the body' which St. Paul declares to be 'not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.'[2]

Before passing on, one cannot help wondering whether it is by accident that, while the lowest and highest steps are of noble and costly stones, marble and porphyry, that between them is a mere common rugged rock to which Dante does not think it worth while to give a name. When we remember that the common nameless rock is symbolic of his own heart, one is tempted to suppose that it was chosen in humility and self-abasement; whereas the noble stones represent noble things —the white marble, the clear mirror of conscience; and the blood-red porphyry, the royal law of Love.

We come now to the climbing of the stairs, which is accomplished by Virgil drawing his companion up 'with good will.' Allegorically this means that it is the dictate of Reason to submit to the Sacrament of Penance in its three parts, Confession, Contrition, and Satisfaction. On the highest step Dante smote himself thrice upon the breast in token of the threefold sin of thought, word, and deed;[3] and then, casting himself devoutly

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 47. The translation of the couplet quoted is given on p. 81.

[2] Col. ii. 23. The Church denies that this satisfaction by the penitent is any disparagement of that made by Christ. 'Neither is this satisfaction,' says the Council of Trent, 'which we discharge for our sins so our own as not to be through Jesus Christ. For we who can do nothing of ourselves as of ourselves, can do all things with the co-operation of Him Who strengtheneth us. Thus man hath not wherein to glory, but all our glorying is in Christ; in Whom we live; in Whom we merit; in Whom we satisfy.'

[3] This is sometimes referred to the three steps. Dante may have been

at 'the holy feet,' he begged the Angel to have mercy upon him and open the Gate. Whereupon the Confessor with his sword inscribed seven P's on Dante's brow, commanding him to wash away the 'wounds' when he is within. The seven P's are the Seven Deadly Sins (*peccata*), one of which is to be purged away on each of the Seven Terraces inside the Gate. The moral idea is that these sins, hitherto carefully concealed, are now in confession written openly upon the forehead by Him who 'sets our secret sins in the light of His countenance'; and the instrument by which the revelation is made is that word of God which is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The passage about the keys is important enough to be quoted:

> Ashes, or earth when it is dug out dry,
> Would be of one colour with his vestment,
> And from beneath this he drew forth two keys.
> The one was of gold, and the other was of silver;
> First with the white, and after with the yellow,
> He did so to the gate that I was satisfied.
> 'Whensoever one of these keys faileth,
> So that it turns not rightly in the lock,'
> Said he to us, 'this passage doth not open.
> More precious is the one, but the other needs
> Exceeding art and wit ere it unlocks,
> For it is that which doth the knot unloose.
> From Peter I hold them; and he said to me to err
> Rather in opening, than in keeping locked,
> If only the people at my feet fall down.'[1]

St. Thomas Aquinas discusses the question of the number of the keys and decides in favour of two, 'one

thinking of St. Bernard's three conditions of perfect confession: humility, simplicity, faith (*Cantica Canticorum*, Serm. xvi).

[1] *Purg.* ix. 115-129. There is a kind of play upon the word *ingegno* in line 125. It means, as translated, 'wit'—the wisdom necessary in one who is to weigh sins and assign satisfactions for them. But also '*ingegno della chiave*' means the key-bit—the part which enters the lock and acts on the tumblers and bolts. This wit, therefore, is the key-bit, which shoots back the bolts by truly weighing the sins and assigning the proper discipline of penance. What that is in Dante's opinion, the Seven Terraces show us.

of which pertains to judgment as to the fitness of him who is to be absolved, and the other to the absolution itself.'[1] This latter is the golden key of Dante, the power to bind and loose, the gold representing the infinite preciousness of the blood and merits of Christ, in virtue of which alone authority to absolve is given to the Church. The silver key, though less precious, as the inferior metal implies, is that which demands the greater art and wisdom. It is the key of knowledge of the fitness of the penitent, the genuineness of his repentance, the comparative guilt of his sins, and the amount and quality of the penitential discipline necessary to render satisfaction for the injury done to God. All this is what Dante means when he says the silver requires 'art and wit' because it 'unlooses the knot'—the snare and entanglement in which sin has knotted up the conscience and life. The priest 'has to decide according to the principles of an elaborate casuistry which he has studied for years, and in which he has been examined by his superiors, before he enters the confessional.'[2] In the natural order of things, this silver key of science must be used before the golden key of authority; and unless both turn in the lock the gate remains closed, the absolution is not valid. In the *Inferno* Dante gives a striking example of the fatal results of using one key only. Pope Boniface VIII., in virtue of his office, held the golden key of authority, and used it to promise pardon by anticipation for the sin he was persuading Count Guido of Montefeltro to commit. Had he used the silver key of science, he would have known, as the demon puts it who seized the Count's soul at death, that

> 'Who repents not cannot be absolved,
> Nor can one repent and will at once,
> Because of the contradiction which consents not.'[3]

In plain words, absolution has no validity unless it is based on the moral and spiritual facts of the case.

On the other hand, Dante did not believe that a man

[1] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. xvii. a. 2.
[2] *Cath. Dict.* p. 702.
[3] *Inf.* xxvii. 118-120.

could, as it were, administer absolution to himself. In *Par.* v. 55-57, discussing the commutation of Vows, he expressly warns against the attempt:

> 'But let not any shift the burden on his shoulder
> At his own judgment, without the turning
> Both of the white key and of the yellow.'

From the Church's point of view the reason is obvious. No man is a good judge in his own case—his conscience is an interested party. 'The sacrament [of Penance] is by its very nature similar to a criminal trial: the penitent is at once accuser, defendant, and witness; while the priest is the judge. When the penitent has declared himself to be guilty, and appeals for mercy on the ground of repentance, it is for the priest to decide whether the case is one for forgiveness or retention of the crime, and also to determine the satisfaction to be made in case of absolution.'[1] For this, knowledge and authority are both necessary, the silver key and the golden.

St. Peter's instructions to the Confessor are that he err, if he err at all, upon the side of mercy, if only the sinners prostrate themselves at his feet. It is possible that there is a reference to the third class of penitents in the Primitive Church known as the 'prostrate' or 'kneelers';[2] but the moral idea is that the Gate is to be opened to any one who bears the marks of genuine humility and self-abasement for sin. 'The possibility of error in the angel,' as Plumptre says, 'rises from the fact that he is thought of, not, so to speak, in his angelic nature, but as the representative of the priestly confessor.' When he opens the Gate, he tells them that he who looks back must return outside, the allusion being to many solemn warnings of Scripture against the backward look. True penitence is a complete and final break with the past; and 'no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'[3] The warning, of course, cannot be addressed

[1] *A Manual of Catholic Theology*, by Wilhelm and Scannell, ii. 471.
[2] See note on p. 79.
[3] Luke ix. 62; Heb. vi. 4-6, etc.

to souls in Purgatory, since there is no doubt of the genuineness of their repentance, and their state of grace is secure: Dante is really thinking of himself and of souls still subject to the imperfect and delusive repentances of this earthly life.

When 'the holy gate' swung upon its hinges, Dante tells us that it roared more shrilly than the gates of the public treasury of Rome on the Tarpeian hill when 'the good Metellus' vainly endeavoured to defend it from Cæsar.[1] He explains this harsh grating sound by the statement that 'the evil love of souls disuses' the door; in other words, penitents are so few that the Gate is seldom opened, and the hinges grow rusty and shrill: 'strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' It is probably for the same reason that when, in a little, he reaches the First Terrace, he finds it, far as his eye could see, to right and left, 'more solitary than roads through deserts.'[2]

At 'the first thunder' of the disused hinges,[3] he turned silently toward it, and through the opening Gate heard a burst of sweetest music, as when one listens at a cathedral door, 'when people singing with the organ stand.' Sometimes he catches the words, and sometimes they are lost in the organ-music, but he recognizes that the hymn is the *Te Deum laudamus*. This hymn had a peculiar appropriateness according to the tradition that it was composed by St. Ambrose on the occasion of St. Augustine's conversion. St. Augustine's own words about the power which the music he heard in the Church at Milan had over him, may have been in the poet's mind: 'O how I wept in Thy hymns and canticles, deeply touched by the voices of Thy Church, sweetly resounding! Those voices flowed into my ears, and the truth distilled into my heart, and thence the affection

[1] Lucan's *Pharsalia*, iii. 153-157, 167, 168.

[2] Matt. vii. 14; *Purg.* x. 21.

[3] Some take 'al primo tuono' to mean 'to the first tone' of the music within, but wrongly. Dante is yet outside the Gate. At the first grating sound of the hinges he turned intently to it. As it opened there came through to him the sound of sweet music.

of my devotion broke forth, and tears ran down, and happy was I therein.'[1] Dante does not say who were the singers. We naturally think of the Angels, in fulfilment of the saying that 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' But it is possible that the singers are the souls upon the Mountain chanting the *Te Deum* in joy that a sinner has begun his purgatorial discipline, just as afterwards we find them singing the *Gloria in excelsis* when a penitent has fulfilled it, and is ready to ascend to Paradise.[2] It is obvious that the music here stands in intentional contrast to the song of Casella down on the shore: the one is a hindrance to the cleansing of the soul; the other draws the penitent joyfully through the open door, eager to begin his purifying pain.[3] The period of what Aquinas calls 'deliberation' is over, the detention due to the semi-paralysis of the will through evil habit;[4] and 'the poets cross the boundary-line which separates regret from repentance, aspiration from energy, mere desire from consecrated resolve.' Dante hears the clanging of the gate as it closes behind him, but there is no turning back; his repentance is not to be repented of, and he sets himself resolutely to the purifying of his soul, a task at once of joy and pain.

[1] *Confessions*, ix. 6.

[2] *Purg.* xx. 136.

[3] *Purg.* i. 106-133. See pp. 31-35; 59-61. The contrast to the Inferno is more obvious. Here there ascends praise to God for salvation; there He is cursed by the lost as the author of their misery:

> God they blasphemed and their progenitors,
> The human race, the place, the time, the seed
> Of their engendering and of their birth! (iii. 103-105).

[4] *Summa*, i-ii. q. cxiii. a. 7.

CHAPTER XI

Terrace I—Pride

1. *The Whip and Bridle of Pride*

When the Gate closed behind them, the poets found themselves in a passage formed by a cleavage in the rocky ramparts which encircled the base of Purgatory proper. The conformation of the pathway is so peculiar that it must have some symbolic significance:

> We mounted upward through a rifted rock
> Which was moving on the one side and the other,
> Even as a wave that recedes and draws near.[1]

The idea that the path was heaving in actual motion like the sea is out of the question. Dante simply means that the ground here and there rose wave-like on one side of the road, and fell away into a hollow on the other. Virgil says they must adapt themselves to this peculiar shape of the ground by keeping to the side on which the wave fell away: in other words, they must zigzag, now here now there, according as the hollow of the undulation swept from side to side. The symbolism is undoubtedly connected with the Terrace to which the path ascends. Dante calls the cleft the 'needle's eye'; and if it led up to the Terrace of Avarice, we would at once connect it with our Lord's saying, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,'[2] and perhaps interpret the undulations in the path as the fluctuations of wealth. But the Terrace to which it leads is that of Pride, and by this the meaning must

[1] *Purg.* x. 7-9.

[2] Matt. xix. 24.

be determined. Translated into plain unfigurative language it comes to this. The first sin to be broken after repentance is Pride, for until this root-sin is crushed no other can be conquered. But it is not easily crushed: for some time after conversion the soul rises and falls on alternate moods of Pride and Humility; on this side the 'proud waves' swell, on that they fall humbly away. It requires, as Virgil says, 'a little art,' to keep to the side that recedes, that is, to the hollow of Humility; and this effort to avoid the heights of Pride so retarded their steps that when they emerged from the needle's eye, the waning moon had sunk to rest, and it was three hours after sunrise. Dante's evident intention is to indicate the way in which, immediately after repentance, alternate waves of Pride and Humility prevent the soul from beginning at once the purifying discipline.

When the Pilgrims emerged from the needle's eye on to the open where the Mountain gathered itself backward, they found themselves on a level Terrace which Dante describes as of a width 'a human body three times told would measure,' that is, seventeen or eighteen feet. Everything tends to humble his pride. His climb from the gate had wearied him, and revealed how small his store of spiritual strength. Virgil and he were alike ignorant of the way: the natural Reason of Man is humbled by discovering how little discernment it has of spiritual things. Then, too, the loneliness of the new life oppresses them: 'as far as his eye could wing its flight' to right or left of the circling Terrace, it was 'more solitary than roads through deserts.'[1] The moral idea undoubtedly is that few indeed are the souls who set themselves to the breaking of their pride. St. Peter's Gate down below grated harshly through disuse, and Dante when leaving the Terrace laments the fewness of those who accept the invitation of the Angel of Humility.[2]

The order of the Terraces up the Mountain side has been indicated in the introductory note, but we may

[1] *Purg.* x. 17-27.

[2] *Purg.* xii. 91-96.

remind ourselves of it here in order to bring out specially the reason why Pride is the lowest of the Seven Deadly Sins, and therefore the farthest from God. Dante divides sins into sins of the flesh and of the spirit. Highest of all he sets the more material and physical sins of Avarice, Gluttony, and Sensuality, as lying more upon the surface of our nature; the spiritual sins in proportion as they penetrate beneath the surface are set lower, Anger, Envy, and Pride; while between the two stands Sloth, as having affinities to both. Pride is set lowest as the root of all the rest. Aquinas regards it as the greatest of all sins because it is 'a turning away from God merely because one will not be subject to God and to His rule'; and, discussing the question whether it is a 'capital' sin, he declares it to be the fountain-head of all evil: 'Considering the universal influence of pride upon all vices, Gregory has not numbered it among the other capital sins, but has ranked it as queen and mother of all vices. Hence he says, "When the queen of vices, pride, has fully overcome and captured a heart, she presently hands it over to be laid waste by her generals, the seven principal vices, whence multitudes of other vices have their origin."'[1] Spenser's 'Pryde Duessa,' riding forth as Queen with her 'six wizards old' of the Deadly Sins, is little more than a poetical paraphrase of this passage. Her coach of state is drawn by 'six unequall beasts,' ridden by her 'six sage Counsellours,' two and two abreast: in front, Idlenesse on his Asse and Gluttony 'on a filthie Swyne'; behind these, Lechery 'upon a bearded Gote' and Avarice 'upon a Camell loaden all with gold'; and finally and nearest to their Queen as likest her in nature, Envy 'upon a ravenous Wolfe' and 'fierce revenging Wrath upon a Lion, loth for to be led': the whole 'laesy teme' driven on by 'Sathan with a smart-

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxii. a. 6, 8. Dr. Moore notes that St. Gregory and other writers distinguish 'the generic term Pride (Superbia) from the specific vice of Vainglory (inanis gloria).' Also that he regards them as springing from one another in the following order: Vainglory, Envy, Anger, Gloominess (Tristitia), Avarice, Gluttony, Lust—Pride, of course, being their common root (*Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 187). The whole discussion of Dante's Classification of Sins should be read.

ing whip in hand.'[1] This simply puts in pictorial form what Dante means by setting Pride on the lowest of the Terraces: she is the Queen of all the other sins, and until her power is broken it is useless to attempt to break theirs. As we shall see, the erasing of this first P from Dante's brow almost obliterates the remaining six, and makes the climbing of the hill easier far than walking on the level.

The moment the poets emerged from the needle's eye, Dante's attention was arrested by the fact that the embankment which rose right opposite him to the next Terrace, was of white marble and adorned with sculptures which would have put Nature's self to shame. They represent pre-eminent examples of Humility, the special virtue to be gained on this Terrace; while on the broad pavement beneath their feet, also of white marble, are carved with equal vividness great instances of the ruin wrought by Pride. On every Terrace similarly contrasted subjects of contemplation are given to the penitents as a means of grace: examples of the virtue which they seek, as a 'scourge' to drive them on in pursuit of it; and examples of the ruin caused by the corresponding vice, as a 'bridle' to hold them in from it. The words 'scourge' and 'bridle' are applied to the examples in the Terrace of Envy, but as they are equally applicable to all, it will be convenient to use them throughout.

Four points of correspondence in respect of this 'scourge' and 'bridle' are pointed out by commentators, and may be stated in the words of Dr. Moore, whose interesting discussion of them should be carefully studied.[2]

(1) 'Examples of the *Virtue* are found at the *beginning* of each *Cornice*, and those of *Vice* at the *end*.' This order is probably significant. It may indicate that for the purifying of the soul the contemplation of Virtue is

[1] *Faerie Queene*, Book i. Canto iv. Notice the order: the sins of the spirit are nearest to their Queen, those of the flesh more remote. It is substantially the same in idea as Dante's arrangement of them on the Mount.

[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, pp. 251-258.

more powerful than that of Vice. This does not imply that it must come first in time—the Proud, for instance, meditate first on the Vice and its fruits. It means that meditation on goodness has greater purifying power than the contemplation of evil.

(2) 'There is a studied correspondence between the numbers of these examples'—that is, the numbers of 'scourge' and 'bridle.' The only Terrace which forms an exception is the Sixth, that of Gluttony. In the rest, either the actual numbers correspond, or they are carefully arranged in corresponding groups. The present Terrace gives the most striking instance of this grouping: three examples of Humility are shown, and then a much larger number of examples of Pride are thrown into three corresponding groups by a certain artificial symmetry of the lines.[1]

(3) 'Sacred and profane instances are balanced and interchanged.' This springs from Dante's conviction that God has not left the heathen world without a witness in the law of Nature written on the heart. Heathen examples of Vices and Virtues therefore alternate symmetrically with those drawn from Scripture. 'The explanation of this,' as Dr. Moore says, 'is that one was held by Dante to be as much under the guidance of God's Providence as the other. There is surely much truth and grandeur in this reading of human history. One could imagine Dante pleading for it in the language of S. Paul: "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."'[2]

(4) 'The manner of their presentment [*i.e.* of 'scourge' and 'bridle'] is different on every *Cornice*, but each virtue and its related vice are similarly presented.' The modes are as follows:

I. Terrace of Pride—sculptures on the marble pavement and embankment.
II. Of Envy—voices in the air.
III. Of Anger—visions of the imagination.
IV. Of Sloth—voices of the penitents themselves.

[1] See pp. 160-164.
[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 24.

v. Of Avarice—voices of the penitents, proclaiming examples of Liberality by day, and of Avarice by night.

vi. Of Gluttony—voices out of Trees representing Temperance and Intemperance.

vii. Of Sensuality—the two classes of the Sensual proclaim alternately in hymns and greetings examples of Chastity and 'Luxury.'

An interesting question rises out of this scheme of meditation. Have these various modes of presentment any inner connection with one another, any gradation, for instance, to greater spirituality as one ascends? At first, we are inclined to answer in the negative, because the ascent brings us to the more material and carnal sins. But it is also to be remembered that every Terrace passed purifies the soul and therefore presumably renders it capable of deeper and more spiritual forms of meditation upon vice and virtue, from an outward picture of them as in the sculptures, to inward convictions which take possession of the heart. The following passage from an interesting study of Dante is a suggestive attempt to show the deepening spirituality of 'the vision of the Ideal' as the soul ascends from Terrace to Terrace: 'Upon the rock-walls which bound the terrace of the Proud are carved typical examples of humility. This is the most external representation of the Ideal in Purgatory, and follows first upon its symbolic prophecy in the dream of the Eagle. To the envious the ideal of mercy is proclaimed by a passing voice, implying thus an internal sense which makes possible its immediate recognition. Meekness is revealed in an inward vision, and when we reach the terrace of the Slothful we find that the spiritually discerned ideal has become a conscious inciting motive. "Quick, quick"—cry the eager spirits—"so that the time may not be lost by little love," and they spur themselves to fresh ardour by recalling how "Mary to the mountain ran, and Cæsar, that he might subdue Ilerda, thrust at Marseilles, and then ran into Spain." In the souls of those who mourn their avarice the ideal

has become so clearly defined that they themselves discern the logical relation between the sin and its punishment, and begin to comprehend the fundamental principle of recoil. To the self-convicted glutton even temptation is turned into warning, and from amid the very branches of the tree for whose fair fruit he hungers comes the voice which bids him pass on farther without drawing near. The souls upon the final terrace have attained a higher sanctification, for they have learned that subordination of the lesser to the holier love which destroys temptation and emancipates the soul from the danger of a fall. The meeting penitents do not need to avoid each other, but they "kiss one with one, without staying, content with short greeting." Moreover, both the gluttonous and incontinent have come to love their purifying pain, and have penetrated into "the divine depths of the worship of Sorrow." The former declare that the same "wish leads them to the tree which led the Christ rejoicing to say Eli"; and of the latter we are told that they vanish in the fire "like fish in water going to the bottom." Thus, in each advancing stage of development, the ideal becomes a more internal, inclusive, and inciting power.'[1] If this suggestive gradation is established, it brings us to this interesting result: that while 'lusts of the flesh' are the last to be purged out of human nature, the modes of meditation by which they are met and conquered are increasingly inward and spiritual, as if in fulfilment of St. Paul's command, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'[2]

Returning to the First Terrace, there can be little doubt that the material, colour, and arrangement have some symbolic meaning. The marble may represent the hardness of heart which Pride inevitably creates; or, perhaps, more generally the costly stones and carvings with which proud men love to build and adorn their houses. The white colour is difficult to understand. That it has no meaning is impossible to believe, when we remember the symbolic colours of the three steps below, and the

[1] *A Study of Dante*, Susan E. Blow, pp. 55, 56. [2] Gal. v. 16.

livid-coloured rock of the Terrace of Envy above. Perhaps we may come near the idea if we compare and contrast it with the white vesture of the Angel of this Terrace.[1] There is little doubt that here white has its usual symbolic significance as the colour of *Faith*: the Angel is the Angel of Humility, and the very meaning of humility is faith in God, to the exclusion of faith in self. But faith in self is the essence of Pride; and of this false faith the hard cold whiteness of the marble may be the symbol. The arrangement of the Terrace is simple and obvious. The humble are exalted, their lowliness carved upon the high marble wall. The proud are cast down and their story told upon the pavement, and proud penitent souls tread them underfoot. Their abasement is no common one, for Dante compares the sculptures to those placed over the dead to tell what they once were in life. Thus was it with those carved upon the pavement: 'the pride of life' is over for ever —they lie here now in the last humiliation of death.[2]

We come now to the 'scourge' or 'whip' of Pride—the great examples of Humility which urge the penitents on in pursuit of that virtue. As on every Terrace, the first and supreme example is drawn from the life of the Virgin Mary, who represents the highest reach and perfection of human virtue.[3] The scene which meets Dante the moment he emerges from the needle's eye is the Annunciation, carved on the wall of the embankment so livingly that Gabriel seemed to be saying *Ave*, and *Ecce ancilla Dei* was impressed on the Virgin's

[1] *Purg.* xii. 88, 89. Comp. xxix. 126, etc. [2] *Purg.* xii. 16-24.

[3] This veneration of Mary seems based on passages in the *Speculum Beatæ Mariæ Virginis* of St. Bonaventura. A fanciful play is made on the meaning of the name Maria: 'Domina creaturis omnibus Maria, inquam, dæmonibus est mare amarum spiritualiter, et Maria hominibus est stella maris officialiter, et Maria angelis illuminatrix est æternaliter, et Maria creaturis omnibus est Domina universaliter' (Lect. iii.). Then her worthiness to bear such a name is shown by her perfect freedom from the Seven Deadly Sins through the power of the opposite virtues: 'Convenientissime virgo tam pia vocata est Maria. Ipsa enim est Maria, quæ et omni vitio caruit, et omni virtute claruit. Ipsa, inquam, est Maria, quæ a septem vitiis capitalibus fuit immunissima. Maria enim contra superbiam fuit profundissima, per humilitatem; contra invidiam affectuosissima, per charitatem; contra iram mansuetissima, per lenitatem; contra acediam indefendissima, per sedulitatem; Maria contra

attitude as plainly as a seal on wax. The special humility is that of one who, not regarding herself as worthy of the great vocation which has come to her, yet accepts it meekly as the handmaid of the Lord. It is not, however, the personal humility of the Virgin alone of which Dante is thinking: the thought beneath is the profounder humility of the Incarnation. In other words, the great rebuke of human pride is the humility of God in becoming man. The first thing the Proud have to learn is that it is this Divine lowliness which makes their salvation possible. Hence Gabriel who announced the Incarnation is called

> The Angel who came to earth with the decree
> Of the many years wept for peace,
> Which opened Heaven from its long interdict;[1]

and Mary, through whose humility the Divine Humility became incarnate, is she 'who turned the key to open the high love.'

The two examples which follow are chosen, after the poet's manner, from sacred history and profane, and represent respectively religious and moral humility—humility towards God and man. The first is David dancing before the ark—an example of that enthusiastic reverence for Divine things which renders a man too humble to care for appearances, and utterly indifferent to human scorn and ridicule. The cart and oxen drawing the sacred ark, the seven choirs of singers marching on in front, the incense smoke ascending up Queen Michal looking down in scorn from her palace window—all were carved upon the marble wall so realistically that Dante's senses almost deceived him as he looked; while, utterly indifferent to his wife's contempt,

> There was going before the blessed vessel,
> Dancing with girded loins, the humble Psalmist,
> And more and less than King was he in this—[2]

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avaritiam tenuissima, per paupertatem; Maria contra gulam temperatissima, per sobrietatem; Maria contra luxuriam castissima per virginitatem fuit' (Lect. iv.). In Lect. xv. this passage is expanded. It is to be noted that Dante follows the order of the Seven Deadly Sins as here laid down.

[1] *Purg.* x. 34-36.

[2] *Purg.* x. 64-66. In line 57 Dante refers to the judgment on Uzzah for

more, because, as we read in 2 Sam. vi. 14, he was girded with the linen ephod of the priest; and *less*, because he had humbly laid aside his royal robes in the presence of his subjects. Or, as Vernon says, 'he was more than a king as seen by God, less than a king in the eyes of the proud daughter of Saul,' whose haughty contempt for David is meant to stand in contrast to the humility of her who is the Mother of 'the Son of David.'

Next to this Scriptural example of religious humility, Dante finds carved on the marble wall a companion picture of humility towards man, drawn from heathen story. The mediæval legend, which Dante follows closely, is that one day when the Emperor Trajan on horseback in the midst of his captains and soldiers, was departing to conduct a campaign, a widow, breaking through the throng, caught him by the foot and begged for justice on the murderers of her son. Not unnaturally the Emperor was unwilling to detain a whole army, but she so vigorously repelled his objections that his conscience was moved, and he alighted and redressed her wrongs. It is the rare humility which will allow neither the pressure of great public enterprises nor the low estate of the suppliant to interfere with the sacred claims of justice. It is therefore humility towards man, as David's was humility towards God. It was this 'moved Gregory to his great victory.' The continuation of the legend is that Gregory the Great so admired this act of justice that he prayed the heathen Emperor out of Hell, administered to him the rite of Christian baptism, and thus secured him an entrance into Paradise. Afterwards in the Heaven of Just Kings when Dante saw the shining spirits shape themselves into the head of the imperial Eagle, the starry soul of Trajan is one of five who form the arched eyebrow of the bird; and there as here, he is named immediately after David, who forms the pupil of the Eagle's eye. It is evident

putting forth his hand to steady the ark (2 Sam. xi. 3-7). In *Epis.* viii., 'To the Italian Cardinals,' he says his rebuke of the prelates does not prove him guilty of the presumption of Uzzah, 'for he turned him to the ark, I to the kicking oxen that drag it through devious ways.'

that in Dante's regard Trajan was to the heathen world what David was to Israel and Christendom.[1]

Although it is not until the Pilgrims are about to leave the Terrace that they see the 'bridle' of this sin —examples of the ruin of Pride carved upon the pavement—it will be more convenient to examine these now, in order to bring out more clearly their connection with the three examples of Humility just described. Between the two series there is a deep and significant parallelism of thought, which Dante indicates by a peculiarly artificial and symmetrical structure of his verse. This second series consists of thirteen instances of Pride humbled, the last of which stands by itself and must be examined separately. The remaining twelve are arranged into three groups of four each by an ingenious device of construction. The first group of four are bracketed together by the word *Vedea* (I saw) which begins each of the four *terzine* in which they are narrated. The second four are similarly grouped together by the initial word *O*, and the third by the word *Mostrava* (It showed). Let us look at the three in order.

The *Vedea* group consists of Lucifer, Briareus, the Giants, and Nimrod (xii. 25-36):

> I saw that one who was created noble
> More than all other creatures, down from heaven
> Like lightning fall upon one side.
> I saw Briareus pierced through by the dart
> Celestial, lying on the other side,
> Heavy on the earth in the chill of death.
> I saw Thymbræus, I saw Pallas and Mars,
> Still clad in armour round about their father,
> Gazing on the limbs of the Giants strewn.
> I saw Nimrod at the foot of his great labour,
> As if bewildered, and looking at the people
> Who had been proud with him in Shinar.

There can be no doubt that this group is the exact moral antithesis of the humility of the Virgin Mary. There we have the Annunciation of the Incarnation—the humility of God leaving His throne in Heaven and

[1] *Purg.* x. 73-93; *Par.* xx. 43-48; 100-117.

stooping to earth to be 'born of a woman.' And in this *Vedea* group Dante sets over against this humility of God which thus stoops to earth, the pride of His creatures which seeks to sit upon His throne in Heaven. Lucifer, the Prince of the Seraphim, rises in pride against his Maker. Briareus and the Giants storm Heaven to dethrone Jupiter. Nimrod was regarded by Dante as the builder of the Tower of Babel, his aim being to climb to Heaven. The obvious contrast, therefore, is between the pride of the creature seeking to climb into the very throne of God, and God's humility in leaving His throne and being born on earth of His own 'handmaid,' in order that He might 'open Heaven from its long interdict.'

This leads us to expect a similar antithesis between the second or *O* group and the humility of David dancing before the ark,—between the humility of joyful and enthusiastic reverence for Divine things and proud contempt for God and the gods. This second group consists of Niobe and Saul, Arachne and Rehoboam (xii. 37-48):

> O Niobe, with what sorrowing eyes
> Saw I thee, engraved upon the pathway,
> Between seven and seven thy children slain!
> O Saul, how upon thine own sword there
> Didst thou appear dead upon Gilboa,
> Which thenceforth felt not rain nor dew!
> O mad Arachne, so did I behold thee,
> Already half-spider, sad upon the shreds
> Of the work which ill by thee was wrought!
> O Rehoboam, now no more appears to threaten
> Thine image here; but full of terror
> A chariot bears it off, when none pursues!

These represent various forms of Pride according to the root it springs from. Niobe's is the natural mother-pride in the large number of her children; Saul's that of sheer wilfulness, doggedly determined to have its own way; Arachne's is pride of Art; and Rehoboam's is the pride of the pure fool and coward. But whatever the form, they have this in common, that they are all pride directed against God. Niobe with her fourteen

children boasts herself against Latona who had but two, Apollo and Diana, and her seven sons and seven daughters lie slain around her. Saul refused to execute God's 'fierce wrath upon Amalek,' and his proud career of self-will darkened into madness, defeat, and suicide. Arachne challenged Minerva to a trial of skill in weaving, and Pride turned her art into the vain spinning of spiders' webs. Rehoboam's arrogance and folly in rejecting the counsel of the old men broke up the unity of the chosen people of God—a sin which must have been peculiarly heinous to Dante's mind. It is obvious that this second group of the Proud corresponds to the second example of Humility: it represents proud defiance and contempt of God in direct antithesis to David's humble and enthusiastic joy in God, and in His protection and worship, as symbolized in 'the ark of the covenant.'

We come now to the third or *Mostrava* group, which, by analogy, ought to correspond to the third example of Humility. As Trajan represents Humility towards man, so this group represents Pride towards man. It consists of Eriphyle and Sennacherib, bracketed together because both were slain by their sons; and Cyrus and Holofernes, similarly coupled because both met their fate at the hands of women (xii. 49-60):

> It showed still further—the hard pavement—
> How Alcmæon to his mother costly made
> The ill-fated ornament appear.
> It showed how his sons threw themselves
> Upon Sennacherib within the temple,
> And how, when he was dead, they left him there.
> It showed the ruin and the cruel slaughter
> Which Tomyris wrought when she to Cyrus said:
> 'Blood thou didst thirst for, and with blood I fill thee!'
> It showed how in rout the Assyrians fled
> After that Holofernes had been slain,
> And likewise the remnants of the slaughter.

All four represent Pride working havoc upon mankind, and therefore slain by human hands. Eriphyle, bribed by the fatal necklace of Harmonia, sacrificed to her

vanity the life of her husband, Amphiaräus, who before dying commanded his son Alcmæon to slay his mother. Sennacherib, Cyrus, and Holofernes, 'chief captain of Nabuchodonosor King of the Assyrians,' as he is described in the Book of Judith, represent the ruthless pride of tyrants which drenches the earth in blood to gratify their lust of power and empire. It adds to the horror and shame of their downfall that some are slain by the sons who should protect them, and others by weak women who might be expected to shrink from bloodshed: the natural affections and dispositions hardened into pitilessness by their careers of pride. The group is meant to stand in direct antithesis to the humility of the Emperor Trajan, which made him delay the march of a whole army that he might do justice to a poor widow, childless and unprotected.

And then in one final *terzina* Dante gives a crowning example of the catastrophe of Pride—the downfall of Troy, the 'superbum Ilium' of the *Æneid* (iii. 2, 3). The three lines begin with the three anagrammatic words of the preceding groups: *Vedea, O, Mostrava* (xii. 61-63):

> I saw Troy in ashes and in caverns:
> O Ilion, thee how base and vile
> It showed, the image which is there discerned!

The use of the three anagrammatic words is Dante's way of declaring that all three forms of Pride already spoken of were gathered together in Troy and culminated in her utter destruction: Pride which would climb to Heaven and drag God from His throne; Pride which contemns His will and worship, and abuses His gifts here on earth; and Pride which tramples underfoot the sacred claims of humanity to justice and mercy. It is a warning to nations in general, but to one in particular. When we remember that Dante always regards Æneas as the founder of the Roman Empire, it is obvious that he is holding up the fate of the mother-city as a solemn warning to its offspring. The laws of Divine judgments do not change with the lapse of centuries: 'Wheresoever the carcase is'—the dead body

of a nation rotting in its sins—'there will the eagles be gathered together,'[1]—the vultures of war, to clear away the unclean thing, lest it breed a moral pestilence and corrupt the world.

A still wider application has been proposed. 'Mr. Toynbee,' says Dr. Moore, 'suggests that the initial letters themselves [*i.e.* of the words so often used in the passage, *Vedea, O, Mostrava*] have a significance, viz. VOM or UOM, *i.e.* "Man." Pride is the root-sin and primæval curse of Man, the special cause of his Fall, as it was of that of the Angels before him. . . . It seems possible that Dante may have wished to emphasize this lesson by this artificial and anagrammatic arrangement of the manifold types of Pride.'[2] It is a suggestion by no means too subtle and ingenious when we are dealing with a mind like Dante's. As Dr. Moore points out, this anagrammatic passage is 'followed immediately by an apostrophe to the *human race* in the folly of its pride':

> Now wax ye proud, and on with looks uplifted,
> Ye sons of Eve, and bow not down your face
> So that ye may behold your evil path![3]

An interesting though subordinate aspect of the subject is the pronouncement which Dante here makes on the Art, and especially the Sculpture, of his time. Ruskin claims the poet as an advocate of the theory that Art is imitation of Nature: 'There was probably never a period in which the influence of art over the minds of men seemed to depend less on its merely *imitative* power, than the close of the thirteenth century. No painting or sculpture of that time reached more than a rude resemblance of reality. Its despised perspective, imperfect chiaroscuro, and unrestrained flights of fantastic imagination, separated the artist's work from nature by an interval which there was no attempt to disguise, and little to diminish. And yet, at this very period, the greatest poet of that, or perhaps of any other age, and the attached friend of its greatest

[1] Matt. xxiv. 28.
[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 268.
[3] *Purg.* xii. 70-72.

painter, who must over and over again have held full and free conversation with him respecting the objects of his art, speaks in the following terms of painting and sculpture, supposed to be carried to its highest perfection:—

> " Qual di pennel fu maestro, e di stile,
> Che ritraesse l'ombre e i tratti, ch' ivi
> Mirar farieno uno ingegno sottile?
> Morti li morti, e i vivi parean vivi:
> Non vide me' di me, chi vide il vero,
> Quant' io calcai, fin che chinato givi."
> —Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto xii. l. 64.

> " What master of the pencil, or the style,
> Had traced the shades and lines that might have made
> The subtlest workman wonder? *Dead, the dead,*
> *The living seemed alive; with clearer view,*
> *His eye beheld not, who beheld the truth,*
> Than mine what I did tread on, while I went
> Low bending." —Cary.

Dante has here clearly no other idea of the highest art than that it should bring back, as a mirror or vision, the aspect of things passed or absent. The scenes of which he speaks are, on the pavement, for ever represented by angelic power, so that the souls which traverse this circle of the rock may see them, as if the years of the world had been rolled back, and they again stood beside the actors in the moment of action. Nor do I think,' Ruskin adds, 'that Dante's authority is absolutely necessary to compel us to admit that such art as this *might*, indeed, be the highest possible. Whatever delight we may have been in the habit of taking in pictures, if it were but truly offered to us, to remove at our will the canvas from the frame, and in lieu of it to behold, fixed for ever, the image of some of those mighty scenes which it has been our way to make mere themes for the artist's fancy; if, for instance, we could again behold the Magdalene receiving her pardon at Christ's feet, or the disciples sitting with Him at the table of Emmaus; and this, not feebly nor fancifully, but as if some silver mirror that had leaned against the wall of the chamber, had been miraculously commanded to

retain for ever the colours that had flashed upon it for an instant,—would we not part with our picture—Titian's or Veronese's though it might be?'[1]

There is no doubt that this was Dante's conception of Art in its highest form. The sculptures were so like the reality that but for the correction of the other senses his eyes would have sworn the choirs sang, the incense smoke rolled up, the Roman eagles moved in the wind. No such Divine handiwork, he declares, existed in his day:

> He who on no new thing hath ever looked
> Was the creator of this visible language,
> New to us, because here it is not found.[2]

This verdict on the sculpture of his age becomes more interesting when we remember that Niccola Pisano, the man who did for sculpture what Dante's friend Giotto did for painting, was but lately dead. Ruskin calls him 'the Father of Sculpture' and 'the Master of Naturalism in Italy.'[3] His son Giovanni, almost his father's equal, was still alive, and indeed may have been engaged about the time when this passage was written, in carving his great pulpit for the Cathedral of Pisa. The works of father and son were scattered through many cities of Italy—Pisa, Lucca, Pistoja, Bologna, Perugia, to name no more, and it is impossible to believe that one so deeply interested in Art as the poet was unacquainted with some of them. He evidently believed that, however great their advance upon previous Italian work, they were yet very far from having reached perfect fidelity to Nature.[4]

[1] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. ii. § 5.

[2] *Purg.* x. 94-96.

[3] *Val d'Arno*, Lect. i. 15, 17.

[4] It is frequently said that the pavement of this Terrace was suggested by the famous pavement of Siena Cathedral; but Mr. Cust in his *The Pavement Masters of Siena* thinks that the dates make this impossible, and that the suggestion was rather the other way. 'It was not until more than thirty years after Dante's death that the plans for a greatly enlarged Duomo were abandoned, and the Sienese set themselves to adorn the building in the shape that we see it now. Moreover . . . no records of *ornamental* work done upon the floor exist earlier than 1369. We may, however, I think, fairly turn the proposition the other way, and fancy that the pavement designers had Dante's wonderfully descriptive verses in their minds, when they planned such a work' (p. 3).

There cannot be the slightest doubt, however, that to Dante the supreme value of Art was the moral and religious one—to bring home vividly to soul and conscience the meaning of virtue and vice. He could not have understood the modern æsthetic cant of 'Art for Art's sake.' The *Commedia* itself, full as it is of passages of vivid and piercing beauty, is yet not written, primarily, for their sake. Dante calls himself expressly a Poet of Righteousness, and declares that he sings only at the inspiration and dictate of Love.[1] In short, the chief use of Art is ethical; and when he attributes these sculptures to the hand of the supreme Artist, his deepest meaning is that none but God Himself can carve such exaltations of humility and such destructions of the proud. Both are the direct work of His own hand: 'He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree.'[2]

[1] *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 2; *Purg.* xxiv. 52-54. See pp. 323-325.
[2] Luke i. 51, 52.

CHAPTER XII

Terrace I—Pride

2. *The Discipline of the Proud*

For convenience sake we have examined the examples of Humility and Pride together, though in reality the former come at the entrance to the Terrace, the latter at the departure from it. We have now to see what lies between. As Dante is gazing at the images of Humility, 'dear to see for their Craftsman's sake,' he is startled out of his meditation by a crowd of souls approaching on his left hand, and therefore moving to the right, the direction proper to Purgatory. Their forms are so strange that at first even Virgil's eyes were somewhat baffled. As they draw near Dante is able to 'disentangle' them, and finds that they are souls of the Proud bent down under great stones to humble them. He compares them to corbels supporting a floor or roof in the form of Caryatids, so doubled up, knees to breast, that merely to look at them produces a sense of discomfort. The weight of the stones is greater or less according to the strength of pride to be broken—those who held their heads highest on earth are sunk lowest there. The subject of their meditation is Pride in its ruin and humiliation as depicted on the pavement; and every step treads it underfoot. Their very look showed that their power of endurance was strained to the utmost:

> And he who had most patience in his mien,
> Weeping did seem to say, 'I can no more!'—

perhaps to show how complete is the change from the old spirit of pride which thought it could do everything;

but more probably to indicate their penitential sorrow that they have not spiritual strength to stoop to still lower depths of humility. Thus weighed down as in a nightmare these souls pace wearily round their Terrace, 'purging away the darkness of the world.'[1]

So painful is the impression produced on Dante that he fears to tell how God has ordained that this debt of Pride be paid, lest its severity turn the reader away from repentance.[2] The only comfort he can offer is that the suffering has a limit: 'it cannot go beyond the great sentence.' A little later he breaks out into an invective against 'proud Christians' whose trust in themselves carries them backward when they think they are advancing most:

> Perceive ye not that we are worms,
> Born to form the angelic butterfly,
> That flieth to the judgment without screen?
> Wherefore does your mind float up on high,
> Since ye are as it were defective insects,
> Even as a worm in which formation fails?[3]

In other words, there is absolutely no place for pride in a Christian. We are mere worms whose one purpose of existence—to produce 'the angelic butterfly' or soul —is frustrated by sin, and especially the sin of pride. Even if its formation fails not, it must fly to judgment without screen—the frail butterfly thing which a touch could crush, without concealment, without defence. At no stage of its growth is there room for pride in any Christian soul.

As these undeveloped souls pace their weary round of discipline they repeat the Lord's Prayer. It is thought by some that this Prayer has reference to all the Terraces, as 'containing in its seven petitions the remedy for the seven deadly sins'; but it is not easy to make

[1] *Purg.* x. 130-139; xi. 25-30.

[2] Compare Aquinas, *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.*, App. q. ii. a. 1, where it is said that both as to the pain of *loss* and that of *sense*, 'the least pain of Purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this life.'

[3] *Purg.* x. 121-129. As Mr. Tozer says: 'the symbolism here implied in the comparison of the soul to a butterfly is so natural, that ψυχή seems to have been the only word for a butterfly in Greek.'

this out, and the prayer has a peculiar appropriateness to this First Terrace. As Dean Plumptre says, these proud souls 'have to become as little children (Matt. xviii. 3), and to learn their *Paternoster* once again in all the fulness of its meaning.' Certainly no proud man can truly pray a prayer which breathes in every syllable the spirit of humble and childlike dependence upon the Father for every blessing of spiritual and temporal life alike. The paraphrase of it which Dante gives has this special interest that it tells us indirectly 'with what thoughts Dante himself prayed it.'[1] 'Our Father which art in heaven' is paraphrased thus (xi. 1-3):

> 'O our Father, who in the Heavens abidest,
> Not circumscribed, but through the greater love
> Which to the first effects on high thou bearest.'

The 'not circumscribed' is meant to guard against the idea of a mere local dwelling in the Heavens. We meet it again in the doxology sung by the souls of Theologians in the Heaven of the Sun, whose great subject of study is the Trinity:

> 'That One and Two and Three who ever liveth,
> And reigneth ever in Three and Two and One,
> Not circumscribed, and all things circumscribeth.'[2]

'The first effects' are the Nine Heavens and the Nine Orders of Angels who preside over them—the first works which issued from the Creator's hand.[3] In these spheres and their rulers the 'Love which moves the sun and the other stars' is more fully manifested and more intensely felt; and therefore God dwells in these Heavens not by way of local limitation, but in virtue of the spiritual movement of His love which finds in them a freer course and a more joyous response.[4]

[1] Plumptre draws attention to the 'exceeding beauty' of the Prayer as given here, and 'the jejuneness of the apocryphal paraphrase which has been ascribed to Dante.' See *Professione di Fede*, ll. 211-240, in the Oxford Edition. A translation will be found in Plumptre's *Dante*, ii. 324.

[2] *Par.* xiv. 28-30.

[3] *Purg.* xxxi. 77. Aquinas holds that the Angels were created simultaneously with the universe for its perfection, against the Greek doctors generally who held that they were made *before* all other creatures (*Summa*, i. q. lxi. a. 3).

[4] *Par.* xxxiii. 145.

The first petition is thus paraphrased (4-6):

> 'Praised be Thy Name and Thine Omnipotence,
> By every creature, as befitting is
> To render thanks to thy sweet Spirit.'

It is difficult to think that this is not Dante's way of indicating the Trinity. The 'Name' refers to the Father, already invoked in the opening words. Omnipotence is an attribute of the Son, who is called in Scripture 'the power of God.' The reference to the Spirit seems certain. The word Dante uses, *Vapore*, is obviously taken from the Vulgate of the Book of Wisdom (vii. 25): 'For she is the breath (*vapor*) of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty.' The 'dolce vapore' is therefore that Spirit of Divine Wisdom of whom it is written in the same Book (viii. 1), 'Sweetly doth she order all things.' In short, 'Hallowed be Thy name' meant to Dante praise of the Blessed Trinity, the vision of which broke upon him for one fleeting moment as the final joy of highest Heaven:

> In the profound and shining substance
> Of the high Light appeared to me three circles,
> Of three colours and of one dimension;
> And the first by the second, as rainbow by rainbow,
> Appeared reflected, and the third seemed fire
> Which from the one and the other equally is breathed.[1]

The second petition, 'Thy kingdom come,' runs thus (7-9):

> 'Come unto us the peace of Thy Kingdom,
> For unto it we cannot of ourselves,
> If it come not, with all our intellect.'

It is no straining to read into these words a great part of Dante's religious and political life. In the *De Monarchia* he argues that the Kingdom of God, the final goal of human progress, cannot be realized without peace: 'It is manifest that of all things that are ordered for our blessedness, peace universal is the best. And hence the word which sounded to the shepherds from above was not riches, nor pleasure, nor honour,

[1] *Par.* xxxiii. 115-120.

nor length of life, nor health, nor strength, nor beauty; but peace. For the heavenly host said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will." Therefore also "Peace be with you" was the salutation of the Saviour of mankind. For it behoved Him, who was the greatest of saviours, to utter in His greeting the greatest of saving blessings.' From the religious point of view, peace is that perfect union with God which quiets every desire, for the source of all unrest is desire for something not yet attained. Perfect peace comes with the Beatific Vision which satisfies every desire of the human soul. Hence God is represented as dwelling in the Empyrean, which, itself unmoved, moves the Nine Heavens which it enfolds, with longing for its Divine peace. Dante felt that this kingdom of peace must come to us: it passeth all human understanding to reach. The souls on this Terrace have learnt enough humility to know that no effort of their own 'intellect' can force an entrance: it must 'come.'[1]

In like fashion, the paraphrase of the third petition, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,' bears the stamp of the poet's devout and mystical imagination (10-12):

> 'Even as Thine own Angels of their will
> Make sacrifice to Thee, singing Hosanna,
> So may all men make sacrifice of theirs.'

The reference is to the Nine Orders of Angels who move and govern the Nine Heavens. Their wills are perfectly at one with God's, their function being to act as mediators, transmitting to the different spheres over which they preside the powers which flow from Him. What Dante emphasizes is the *joy* with which the whole Angelic Hierarchy offer their wills as a sacrifice to God. To sinful man the word 'sacrifice' suggests pain; to sinless spirits it is perfect joy,—the sacrifice of the will is made glad with the singing of Hosanna. It is foreshadowed in the obedience of the Earthly Paradise, where the human will, 'free, upright, and sound,' needs no guide beyond its own good pleasure.[2]

[1] See *De Mon.* i. 4; *Conv.* ii. 4; *Epis.* x. 26.
[2] *Par.* xxviii. 106-114; *Purg.* xxvii. 131-142.

The paraphrase of the fourth petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' takes its form from the wilderness wanderings of Israel (13-15):

> 'Give unto us this day our daily manna,
> Withouten which through this rough wilderness
> Backward goes he who toils most to advance'

We cannot doubt that the exile in his poverty had occasion to use this prayer in its unfigurative literalness; and the last words of his Epistle to Florence refusing to return on dishonourable terms—'Nor shall bread fail,' prove that the petition was not unanswered.[1] But the form in which Dante read it in the Vulgate—'Panem nostrum *supersubstantialem* da nobis hodie'—lifted his thoughts to the better bread 'which came down from heaven.' Purgatory is a rough wilderness in which these souls have learnt that no man can make progress toward God who is not strengthened by manna from His own hand.[2] How far is their pride already broken when they regard themselves as homeless pilgrims through a wilderness, and powerless to advance one step towards the Canaan of their hopes unless God feed them daily with the spiritual bread from heaven.

The fifth petition, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,' shows us the same humility in another direction (16-18):

> 'And even as we the evil we have suffered
> Pardon to every man, do thou pardon
> Benignly, and regard not our desert.'

This implies the breaking of their pride towards both God and man. They know that they have no merit to plead before heaven: God's forgiveness must be of pure benignant grace. This humility decides their attitude to their fellows: they cannot ask unmerited pardon from God without being willing to grant it as freely to others; and this gracious forgetfulness of wrongs is possible only to the humble heart and the contrite spirit. As we saw, even those who die by violence must

[1] *Epis.* ix. This letter, if genuine, was written after fifteen years of exile.

[2] For 'Bread of Angels,' see *Conv.* i. 1. The 'supersubstantial' bread seems to be referred to in *Purg.* xxxi. 128.

forgive their murderers: 'penitent and pardoning,' they enter into peace with God.[1]

The last petition has been already discussed. These spirits of the Proud pray for protection from temptation, but not for themselves (19-24).

> 'Our virtue, which is lightly overcome,
> Put not to proof with the old Adversary,
> But deliver us from him who spurs it so.
> This last petition, verily, dear Lord,
> Not for ourselves is made, who need it not,
> But for their sake who have remained behind us.'

At first sight, this looks like the creeping back of Pride in a more spiritual form, the sense of superiority to temptation which seems incompatible with true humility of soul. What Dante evidently wishes to indicate is that there comes a point in the new life at which the power of temptation is completely broken, its lie and delusion seen through and done with. This, however, does not mean that no remains of past evil linger in the soul; on the contrary, the old sinful habit of Pride lies on it with the crushing weight of rocks. Nevertheless, the charm and delusion of the Tempter are gone: he is recognized as the serpent he is, and no new wile can lead them into new sin. The limitation of the petition to those 'who have remained behind us' has been already considered, so far as it relates to the souls on the slopes of Ante-Purgatory; but those whom Dante has specially in view are Christians still in this present life. He urges those 'who have a good root to their will' to pray for those beyond, who are always praying for them. In this last opinion he diverges from the teaching of Aquinas, who holds that while the souls in Purgatory need the prayers of those on earth, they cannot benefit them in turn by any prayers of their own.[2]

Three of the souls on this Terrace are singled out as representatives of the three forms of Pride with which Dante was most familiar: Pride of Ancestry, of Art,

[1] *Purg.* v. 52-57. See p. 65.

[2] *Purg.* xi. 31-36. Aquinas, *Summa*, ii-ii. q. lxxxiii. a. 11. See pp. 115-119.

and of Power. The representative of the first is Omberto, 'born,' to use his own words, 'of a great Tuscan,' Guglielmo Aldobrandeschi, Count of Santafiora, near Siena—a territory so lawless that Dante elsewhere says ironically, 'how safe is Santafiora.'[1] Omberto confesses that the sin for which he here bends his neck is Pride of the ancient blood and gallant deeds of his ancestors, a pride so great 'that forgetting the common mother,' he held all men in such scorn that it was the ruin of him and of his house. The Sienese slew him at the village of Campagnatico and broke the power of the family.[2]

There is no doubt that Pride was one of the poet's own besetting sins, probably, indeed, the fundamental one. On the next Terrace he expressly says that while he does not fear the sewing up of the eyes which is the penalty of Envy, he does fear, and fear greatly, the punishment of the Proud:

> Even now the load down there weighs on me.[3]

Equally certain is it that he knew this particular form of Pride. He confesses that in Paradise itself, where his noble forefather, Cacciaguida, who died in the Crusades, greeted him: 'O sanguis meus!' he was powerless to restrain a thrill of pride, even though he knew the sin and folly of it:

> Ah thou our poor nobility of blood,
> If thou dost make the people glory in thee
> Down here where our affection languisheth,
> A marvellous thing it ne'er will be to me;
> For there where appetite is not perverted,
> I say in Heaven, I gloried me therein.
> Truly thou art a mantle that soon shrinketh,
> So that, unless we piece thee day by day,
> Time goeth round about thee with the shears.[4]

'We may notice here,' as Vernon says, 'that, although

[1] *Purg.* vi. 111. See p. 89.

[2] The accounts of his death vary. According to one he was slain in a fight with the Sienese; a second says he was suffocated in bed by hired assassins; a third, that certain young nobles of Siena, disguised as monks, gained an entrance to his castle and despatched him (Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*, p. 406).

[3] *Purg.* xiii. 133-138. See p. 197.

[4] *Par.* xvi. 1-9.

Dante records, in *Par.* xv., that his great-grandfather Aldighiero is actually in this Cornice at the time he visits it, yet family pride prevents him from giving any description of his ancestor in so undignified an attitude; but he devotes three whole Cantos to his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida, whom he describes among the Blessed in the Heaven of Mars. He puts into Cacciaguida's mouth the information about Aldighiero's penance in Purgatory.'[1] Dante's own share in the sin is confessed by his stooping in sympathy with the attitude of Omberto: 'listening I bent down my face.'[2] The general question of Nobility is discussed at great length in the Fourth Book of the *Convito*. The idea that a man is ennobled by possession of wealth or passage of time is set aside contemptuously as a vulgar fallacy. *Gentilezza* does not run in the blood: 'Let not him of the Uberti of Florence, nor him of the Visconti of Milan, say: "Because I am of such a race I am noble"; for the divine seed falls not upon the race, that is the stock, but falls upon the several persons; and, as will be shown below, the stock does not ennoble the several persons, but the several persons ennoble the stock.' The conclusion is:

> Gentlehood is wherever virtue is,
> But not virtue where is she;
> Even as is the heaven wherever is the star,
> But not conversely.[3]

It is the idea expressed more epigrammatically by our own poet:

> The rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The man 's the gowd for a' that.

The representative of the second form of this sin—Pride of Art—is Oderisi of Gubbio, who is believed to have died the year before the ideal date of the poem. Dante greets him as

[1] Vernon's *Readings on the Purgatorio*, i. 386 n. [2] *Purg.* xi. 73.

[3] *Conv.* iv. 20; Canzone iii. Boethius has the same argument. The glory of noble birth is only praise for the merits of forefathers, not for one's own. The only good of such birth is that it binds a man in honour not to fall below the virtue of his ancestors (*Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. iii. Prose vi.).

'the honour of that art
Which is in Paris called illuminating.'[1]

Vasari in his Life of Giotto says he was a great friend of that artist, and that he 'adorned many books for the Pope for the palace library.' One wonders why Dante did not choose a more famous artist, such as Cimabue or Niccola Pisano; he may have taken the illuminator because of the exaggerated esteem in which he held his own work. The light of another world, however, has shown him the vanity of all human art. So humble is he now that he praises his old pupil, Franco of Bologna, and admits that 'more laughing are the leaves he paints.' And then he moralizes upon the commonplace of the emptiness of human fame. The passage is interesting for its estimate of the artists and poets of the age, Dante himself included, and the veering of the wind of fame from one name to another:

'O thou vainglory of the human powers,
How little green upon thy summit lingers
If it be not o'ertaken by an age of darkness!
In painting Cimabue thought that he
Should hold the field, now Giotto has the cry,
So that the other's fame is growing dim.
So has one Guido from the other taken
The glory of our tongue; and he perchance
Is born, who from the nest shall chase them both.
Naught is this worldly rumour but a breath
Of wind, that comes now this way and now that,
And changeth name, because it changeth side.
What fame shalt thou have more, if age strip off
From thee thy flesh, than if thou hadst been dead
Before thou leave the *pappo* and the *dindi*,
Ere pass a thousand years? which is a shorter
Space to the eterne, than twinkling of an eye
To the circle which in heaven wheels slowest.'[2]

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[1] *Purg.* xi. 79-81. Mr. Toynbee in his *Dante Studies and Researches*, p. 266, says Dante uses *alluminare* here 'instead of the usual Italian *miniare* in order to represent the French *alluminer*, *enluminer*, or *illuminer* (all three were employed) . . . In Dante's time Paris was the great centre for the production of illuminated MSS. of all kinds, Bibles especially.'

[2] *Purg.* xi. 91-108. *Pappo* is the child's pronunciation of *pane*, bread, and *dindi* of *denari*, money. 'The circle which in heaven wheels slowest' is the Heaven of the Fixed Stars. In *Conv.* ii. 15, Dante speaks of its motion from West to East (the precession of the equinoxes) as

The fame of one age depends on that which succeeds it. A brighter genius eclipses it; and it is only when it is followed by an age of decadence that it shines forth like a star against the surrounding darkness.

The reference to Dante himself in lines 97-99 is sometimes denied, but without good reason. The two Guidos referred to are usually taken to be Guido Guinicelli and Guido Cavalcanti,[1] and it is quite certain that Dante regarded himself as a greater poet than either. In the Limbo of the Unbaptized he has no hesitation in ranking himself with the five greatest poets of antiquity; and his love of fame is so strong that without it man's earthly life is as evanescent as smoke in air or foam on water.[2] Is this, then, an example of his pride breaking out on the very Terrace appointed for its punishment? It may well be, when we remember that Paradise itself could not quite curb his pride in 'our poor nobility of blood.' If for the moment he gives way to the temptation here, it is, as Plumptre says, 'as with a certain grave irony which claims only the passing glory of an idle day, and anticipates only, for himself as for others, the utter oblivion which time ultimately brings to all that belongs to the fashion of the world.'

The last form of this sin—Pride of Power—is represented by a soul whom Oderisi points out in front of him:

> 'With him, who takes so little of the road
> In front of me, all Tuscany resounded;
> And now he scarce is lisped of in Siena,
> Where he was lord, what time was overthrown
> The Florentine delirium, which superb
> Was at that day as now 'tis prostitute.

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advancing only one degree in a hundred years. It would therefore take 36,000 years to complete the revolution. For the vanity of human fame see Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. II. Prose vii. both of which Dante may have had in mind. Compare Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, lxxvi.

[1] Other suggestions are that the Guido eclipsed by Guido Cavalcanti is Guido delle Colonne or Guittone of Arezzo. Scartazzini ridicules the idea that Dante refers to himself in lines 98, 99, on the ground that he could not say '*perchance* he is born' about himself, since he knew he was certainly born! One scarcely knows what to make of such prosaic criticism.

[2] *Inf.* iv. 97-105; xxiv. 46-51.

Your reputation is the colour of grass
Which comes and goes, and he discolours it
Thro' whom it issues fresh from out the earth'—[1]

that is, the sun. The idea is not, as is usually supposed, that time, which makes a reputation, also withers it. It is rather that the sunshine of prosperity which nourishes a man's renown also destroys it. The penitent referred to was Provenzano Salvani, Governor of Siena. In 1260 he was leader of the victorious Sienese at the battle of Montaperti, 'when the Florentine delirium was overthrown'; and it was he who made the proposal to destroy Florence which Farinata degli Uberti so indignantly opposed.[2] 'This Messer Provenzano,' says Villani, 'was a great man in Siena in his day after the victory which he gained at Montaperti, and he ruled all the city; and all the Ghibelline party in Tuscany made him their head, and he was very presumptuous in will.' Nine years later he was routed and captured at Colle di Valdelsa by the Florentines, who beheaded him on the battlefield and carried his head on a lance throughout the camp.[3] 'He is here,' says Oderisi,

'because he was presumptuous
To bring Siena all into his hands.'

This, however, is just what Dante cannot understand—how he comes to be so far up the Mountain. The law of Purgatory is that those who postponed repentance are detained on the lower slopes as many years as they delayed, unless the period was shortened by the prayers of friends on earth. Dante seems to assume that no such prayers were said for Provenzano: how, then, had he reached this height already? Oderisi replies that it was in virtue of a great act of humility and love which he had performed on earth. The story is that one of his friends having been captured at the battle of Tagliacozza and held to ransom by Charles of Anjou, Salvani at the height of his fame and splendour seated himself in the public square of Siena in the garb of a beggar,

[1] *Purg.* xi. 109-117. [2] *Inf.* x. 91-93.

[3] Villani's *Chronicle*, vii. 31. It was this defeat of her countrymen at Colle for which Sapia prayed so impiously to God. See xiii. 112-123.

until he received the necessary sum. Dante, who set false friends in the lowest Circle of Hell, must have had the deepest admiration for so loyal an act of friendship: he saw in it that 'fire of love' which fulfils in a moment more than years of penitential discipline.[1] To a proud man like Salvani, the begging of alms in the city of which he was Governor, must have been a kind of crucifixion. Oderisi describes the agony of the humiliation, and declares that Dante would soon understand it by his own experience:

> 'He brought himself to tremble in every vein.
> I say no more, and know that I speak darkly;
> But little time will pass before thy neighbours
> Will so act thou shalt be able to expound it.'[2]

It is, of course, a prophecy of the humiliation of Dante's exile. He too 'trembled in every vein' with the shame of having to become virtually a public beggar. 'I have wandered,' he writes in the *Convito*, 'a pilgrim, almost a beggar, displaying against my will the wounds of fortune.' It is pathetic to find that a man like Dante was unable to continue his commentary on the *Paradiso* for lack of the means of life, and was compelled to appeal to the liberality of a patron.[3]

Leaving Oderisi, Dante moved on, his head bent humbly in examination of the scenes of ruin caused by Pride, carved on the marble pavement beneath his feet. So absorbed was he that Virgil had to bid him lift his head—it is possible that even the contemplation of the effects of Pride may extend beyond the limits of Reason, and the time is fast slipping away:

> 'Think that this day will never dawn again.'[4]

It is already a little past noon: 'the sixth handmaiden is returning from the service of the day.' It is certainly not by accident that it is at this hour Dante meets the Angel of Humility who guards the Terrace, and is delivered from the burden and bondage of Pride. For

[1] *Purg.* vi. 37-39. [2] *Purg.* xi. 138-141. [3] *Conv.* i. 3; *Epis.* x. 32.
[4] *Purg.* xii. 84. See iii. 78; *Conv.* iv. 2. One is reminded of the Sibyl's rebuke of Æneas for wasting the hours in weeping (*Æn.* vi. 538, 539). Much uncertainty prevails as to the time spent on this Terrace. Vernon thinks about three and a half hours, Butler one hour.

Dante has a symbolism of Time, as of other things. In the *Convito* (iv. 23) he says: 'The sixth hour, that is, mid-day, is the most noble of the whole day, and has the most virtue.' It is for this reason that this hour is chosen for his final cleansing in Eunoë on the Mountain-top.[1] When we remember that Pride is the root of all the other Deadly Sins, we can understand why Dante regards the hour in which it is conquered as that of greatest nobility and virtue in the day of human life.

The description of the Angel who now appears is full of spiritual symbolism:

> Toward us came the creature beautiful
> Vested in white, and in his countenance
> Such as appears a tremulous morning star.[2]

He is the Angel of the virtue to be won upon this Terrace, Humility, and it is in the light of this we are to understand the whiteness of his robes. For the symbolic colour of Faith is white. When the three theological virtues appear on the top of the Mountain, Faith 'seemed as snow new fallen.'[3] There is a peculiar appropriateness in thus clothing the Angel of Humility in the white garment of Faith. For Faith is trust in God, and without trust Humility is a moral impossibility. It is the opposite of Pride, which is at root trust in one's self.

The comparison of the Angel's face to 'a tremulous morning star' is not easy to understand, but we cannot be wrong in associating it in some fashion with the virtue of Humility. There is no reason to identify the morning star with Venus, as some do, for Venus being a planet does not tremble. The comparison is in reality beautifully symbolic of the Angel's humility. The idea before Dante's mind seems to be that of a star beginning to grow tremulous and dim as it loses itself in the rising sun. Just so the humble spirit loves to lose itself in the light of God, to veil its own glory before His. It is no fanciful interpretation. We find precisely the same idea in another form in the *Paradiso*. In the

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 103-104. See p. 495.
[2] *Purg.* xii. 88-90.
[3] *Purg.* xxix. 126.

Second Heaven the souls of men who did great deeds, not for the glory of God alone but partly for their own glory, are set in the planet Mercury. Now, Mercury is symbolic of many things—among the rest, the great lesson of humility which its inhabitants have learned. It is called 'the sphere

Which veils itself from mortals with another's rays.'[1]

The planet Mercury is so near the sun that it is scarcely visible—it is lost in his greater light. And in the same way, its inhabitants, who once sought their own glory, are now content to let it be lost in the greater glory of God. Morally and spiritually it is the same idea as the comparison of the Angel's face to 'a tremulous morning star'—Humility which is willing to lose itself in the Eternal Light.

Opening his wings, and reaching out his arms in eager welcome, the Angel guided the Pilgrims at once to the stairs which led up to the next Terrace, that of Envy. His office is to guard these steps, for, since Pride is obviously the root of Envy, no soul is morally fit to begin purifying itself from the latter vice until it has overcome the former. At the entrance to the passage, the Angel smote Dante on the forehead with his wings and promised him a safe ascent, now that Pride was broken. Every detail of the narrative is meant to show how amply the promise was fulfilled. In the first place, the stairway is the easiest that Dante has yet met upon the Mountain. He compares it to the steps cut in the hill on which stands San Miniato,

the church that overhangs
The well-guided one, above Rubaconte,

to break the abruptness of the ascent.[2] As they turn to enter it, voices chant the first Beatitude with a sweetness beyond words:

BEATI PAUPERES SPIRITU.

[1] *Par.* v. 128, 129.

[2] *Purg.* xii. 100-105. Rubaconte is the bridge over the Arno now called Ponte alle Grazie. It received its original name from the Podestà Rubaconte da Mandello of Milan who laid the first stone in 1237 (Villani, vi. 26). For the cutting of the steps to San Miniato, see Villani, i. 57; the reference in l. 105 of Canto xii. to the falsification of records and measures is repeated in *Par.* xvi. 105.

With these words of blessedness sounding in his ears, so different from the wild lamentations and curses of the Inferno, Dante is surprised to find the climbing of the stairway easier than walking on the level of the Terrace had been, as if a burden had fallen from his shoulders, and begs Virgil to tell him the reason why. The answer contains Dante's deepest conviction on the subject of Pride and Humility:

> 'When the P's which have remained
> Still on thy forehead almost extinguished,
> Shall, like the one, be wholly rasèd out,
> Thy feet will be so conquered by good will
> That not alone they shall not feel fatigue,
> But urging up will be to them delight.'[1]

In surprise Dante raised his hand to his brow and found that only six of the letters carved by the Angel with the keys remained. His very unconsciousness of the erasing of the P of Pride is, as Plumptre says, proof of the genuineness of his humility: 'true humility is unconscious that it is humble.' The sense of lightness, the absence of fatigue, the partial obliteration of the other six sins—all are true to spiritual experience. The reason is partly that all the vices are so vitally connected with one another, that a change in one involves a change in all. As St. Bonaventura says, when one virtue grows all grow, just as when one string of a lyre is tightened, all the others must be tightened in proportion, in order to preserve the harmony.[2] But the principal reason is that Pride is regarded as the root of all the other vices, and once it is destroyed they wither away. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Dante here follows closely, 'Pride is of its kind the most grievous of sins, because it exceeds them all in that turning away from God, which is the formal and crowning constituent of sin.' 'Among grievous sins,' he adds, 'Pride is the first, as being the cause that makes other sins grievous.'[3]

[1] *Purg.* xii. 121-126. [2] Bonaventura, *Compend. theol. verit.* v. 7.

[3] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxii. a. 6, 7, 8. Chaucer in his *Parson's Tale* says: 'Of the roote of thise sevene synnes is pride, the general roote of alle harmes, for of this roote spryngen certeine braunches, as ire; envye;

The passage has been already quoted in which Gregory regards Pride as 'the queen and mother of all sins,' who delivers the heart she has captured 'to be laid waste by her generals, the seven principal vices.' It follows that when the queen is dethroned and slain, the power of her generals is broken. Envy and anger, for instance, cannot gain any foothold and lodgement in a heart of perfect humility; 'the nerves of all the other vices are cut,' and Virgil gives his companion a smile of joy and approval at his liberation from the burden of his pride and the promise and earnest it gave of final victory over every sin.

accidie, or slewthe; avarice, or coveitise, to commune understondynge; glotonye; and lecherye. And everich of thise chief synnes hath his braunches and his twigges as shal be declared in hire chapitres folwynge.' Chaucer's order of the sins is that of their arrangement on the Mountain.

CHAPTER XIII

Terrace II—Envy

When the Pilgrims emerge from the stairway, they find the Terrace of Envy entirely different in appearance from the one they had just left. The white marbles and rich carvings of Pride are gone, and nothing meets the eye but the bare and livid rock. It is symbolically a picture of the world as seen by Envy. For Envy can enjoy nothing, turns life into a hard, bare, rocky desert, and flings its own livid colour upon all it sees.[1]

At first not a soul is in sight; and Virgil, afraid to lose time by waiting for some one to appear, resolves to take the sun for guide:

> Then steadfast on the sun his eyes he fixed;
> Made of his right side a centre of motion,
> And the left part of himself did turn.
> 'O sweet light, in whose trust I enter
> On the new pathway, do thou us lead,'
> Said he, 'as one within here should be led.
> Thou warmest the world, thou shinest o'er it;
> If other reason prompt not otherwise,
> Thy rays should evermore our leaders be.'[2]

Plumptre's explanation that the sun is 'the symbol of Divine illumination, working through Nature, the "Light that lighteth every man,"' is too vague and general. The idea is much more closely connected with

[1] 'Certes thanne is envye the worste synne that is; for soothly alle othere synnes been somtyme oonly agayns o special vertu, but certes, envye is agayns alle goodnesses, for it is sory of all the bountees of his neighebore; and in this manere it is divers from alle othere synnes; for wel unnethe (scarcely) is ther any synne that it ne hath som delit in itself, save oonly envye, that ever hath in itself angwissh and sorwe' (Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*). The Italian *livore*, envy, comes from the Latin *livor*, a bluish or leaden colour, hence envy, from its *livid* hue.

[2] *Purg.* xiii. 13-21.

the sin of Envy and its purification. Dante is thinking of the words in Matthew v. 44, 45: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: *for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.*' The passage is referred to again in line 36. Virgil turns to the sun because its impartial shining on good and evil is the symbol of that unwearied generosity of God which is the daily and hourly rebuke of man's grudging and envious spirit. It is, indeed, as we shall see, one of the sorest punishments of these envious souls that to them

Heaven's light will not be bounteous of itself—[1]

they have blinded themselves to the free and generous shining of its rays. Virgil, in his character of Reason, feels that he cannot go far wrong if he take as guide the ungrudging liberality and love with which God pours out the impartial sunlight upon the wide world.[2]

Turning to the right hand,[3] the Poets had walked a mile when they were suddenly startled by the rush toward them of invisible wings, and successive voices flew past them of spirits uttering

Unto Love's table courteous invitations.

These voices in the air form the 'whip' which urges on the souls in pursuit of generosity and love; and the

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 69.

[2] Comp. *Par.* vii. 64-66:

> Goodness Divine, which from itself doth spurn
> All envy, burning in itself shoots forth
> Such sparkles, that the eternal beauties it displays.

Also the *Timæus*, 29: 'Let me tell you then why the creator created and made the universe. He was good, and no goodness can ever have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible . . . God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad in so far as this could be accomplished' (Jowett's Translation).

[3] In Botticelli's drawings the Poets are represented as going to the *left*. Canto xiii. 13-15 shows that this is wrong: Virgil makes his right side the axis, and swings his left side round on it, which obviously turns him to the right hand. This direction is afterwards confirmed by the very silence of the souls here—had the Pilgrims been going to the left, they would have told them (xiv. 127-129).

'bridle' to hold them from envy takes the same form of the voices of invisible spirits proclaiming examples of the ruin wrought by this sin. The reason for this particular form is partly that the Envious having their eyes sewed up, it would have been useless to set before them any visible picture, such as the sculptures on the Terrace below; and partly that their ears, which envy had so long made eager to listen to scandal against their neighbours, must learn to find their pleasure in another kind of news. The invisible voices in the air, and the way in which they fly past Dante and reiterate their cries behind him, are symbolic of the flying rumours of evil about others with which these envious souls once filled the air, and the endless repetition of them behind men's backs. They must now learn to use their voices as do the invisible spirits here—for the spread of things true and kindly, which may warn from evil and allure to good. In short, Envy is a sin of the eyes, of the ears, of the tongue, and therefore all three must undergo the necessary discipline. One is reminded of the figure of Envy which Dante's friend Giotto painted on the wall of the Arena Chapel in Padua. He gives her long ears, to catch every breath of rumour that may hurt a neighbour; out of her mouth issues a serpent-tongue, swift to poison names and reputations; and this serpent-tongue coiling back upon herself, stings her own eyes. This last particular corresponds to Dante's sewing up of envious eyes with iron wire, but conveys the still subtler meaning that the blindness of Envy is caused by the recoil of its own poisonous tongue: a habit of backbiting and detraction destroys the power of seeing any good in our fellowmen.[1]

Let us now examine the 'whip' with which these souls are urged on in pursuit of the virtue of ungrudging joy in the good of others.

> 'The cords of the whip are drawn from love,'[2]

says Virgil. The reason is obvious. 'Envy,' writes

[1] See this picture of Envy in Ruskin's *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, p. 185 (Ed. 1900).

[2] *Purg.* xiii. 25-39; *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxvi. a. 2. Comp. Canto xvii. 118-120.

Aquinas, 'is a sadness at another's good'; it is therefore a sin against love, and only love can cure it. 'Certes thanne,' says Chaucer in the *Parson's Tale*, 'is love the medicine that casteth out the venym of envye fro mannes herte.' Hence the voices in the air repeat examples of love to neighbours, to friends, to enemies. The first example is, as usual, drawn from the life of the Virgin. An unseen spirit flies past repeating Mary's words at the marriage feast, *Vinum non habent*,[1] until the sound is lost in the distance. It is a simple and homely act of kindly forethought to save her neighbours shame or confusion. Perhaps the suggestion is right that it is meant as a corrective of the envy with which women too often regard the lavish preparations and display made in other women's feasts. An envious woman would have a secret joy in the breakdown of the arrangements; to the Virgin's kind and neighbourly heart it causes only pain. The second cry in the air, 'I am Orestes,' proclaims the love of friend to friend. The reference is to the well-known story that when Orestes, son of Agamemnon, was about to be put to death in Tauris, his friend Pylades presented himself, saying, '*I* am Orestes,' that he might die in his stead. Orestes refusing to accept the sacrifice, persisted in maintaining his own identity; and it is probably the cry and counter-cry of the two friends, 'I am Orestes,' that Dante hears in the air above him. It is an illustration of Christ's own words from that heathen world which never heard them: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'[2]

The third voice in the air, however, shows that Christ asks something still more difficult—the return of love for hate: 'Love those from whom ye have had evil.' The reference is to the passage in Matthew, already quoted, which speaks of the generous impartial shining of the sun on good and evil. Doubtless Christ's own love to those from whom he received evil, was the supreme example in Dante's mind.

At this point Virgil promises his companion that he

[1] John ii. 3. [2] John xv. 13.

will hear the sound of the 'bridle'—that is, voices proclaiming examples of the ruin wrought by Envy—before he reaches 'the Pass of Pardon,' the stair, namely, by which the soul, purified of this sin, climbs to the next Terrace. It will, however, bring out the contrast better between 'whip' and 'bridle' if we examine the latter now.[1] It is, as Virgil says, 'of a contrary sound.' The voices are compared to one thunderclap following another—to indicate the fury of Envy, the ruin which the storm of its passion brings, and the terror which the sound of it wrought in Dante's soul. Two instances are given, one from sacred and one from heathen story, according to Dante's custom. The first terrified thunder-cry is Cain's 'Shall slay me whosoever findeth me!' The first murder was wrought through envy; it broke the natural bond of love between brothers; and it pursued the fratricide with a constant terror of meeting the same dark fate at the hands of others. The second thunder-peal brings us to heathen story:

'I am Aglauros who became a stone!'

As Cain envied his brother the favour of Heaven, so Aglauros envied her sister the love of a god. The story is from Ovid.[2] Mercury loved Hersë, the most beautiful of the daughters of Cecrops, King of Athens; and when Aglauros through envy prevented him from visiting her sister, he turned her into stone. In moral symbolism it represents the intense hardness of heart created by envy, and in particular by that envy which has its root in wounded, unrequited love. 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave.'[3]

So terrified is Dante by these disastrous consequences of Envy, that he takes a step 'backward and not forward,' in order to press himself close to his guide; and for this backward step Virgil administers a rebuke, though in form it is addressed to men in general.

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 130-151.

[2] *Metam.* ii. 708 ff. In *Canz.* xviii. 71, Dante uses 'Aglauro' for envy, as one of the sins that devoured Florence.

[3] Canticles, viii. 6. In the Vulgate it sounds even more terrible: 'dura *sicut infernus* æmulatio.'

The precise meaning is not easy to find, but the rebuke seems to be based on the contrast between two ways of meeting the temptation to envy. The lower mode is that adopted here by Dante—pressing to the side of Virgil who stands for human Reason. It is as if Dante, terrified by the warning thunder, said to himself: 'If these are the awful effects of Envy, if it thus sets brother against brother, sister against sister, if it fills the world with fear and murder, and turns the heart into a stone, it is madness to indulge in it. I must rouse my reason against it, and argue myself into resistance.' And the reply of Virgil—that is, Reason's self—is that here Reason is not enough. To press to its side, as Dante is doing, is a step 'backward and not forward.' It is to fall back on the lower motive of mere fear of punishment. This bridle ought, indeed, to hold men in, but it fails. The bait of 'the old Adversary' is too alluring. Nothing really avails but the setting of the affections upon the things which are above:

> 'The heavens are calling you, and wheel around you,
> Displaying to you their eternal beauties,
> And your eye upon the earth alone is gazing;
> Whence He, who all discerns, chastiseth you'—

that is, in order to compel you to look up to the circling heavens. No lower mode avails. Merely to turn to Reason is a backward step.

Let us now examine the description of the Envious, every detail of which has its own moral and spiritual significance. To begin with, they are almost invisible. Virgil has to point them out sitting close against the cliff, and bids Dante fix his eyes steadfastly if he wishes to see them. The reason is that they are clad in mantles of the same livid colour as the rock, and seem part of it. This almost invisibility is probably indicative of their new humility: formerly their envy longed for greater recognition and conspicuousness; now, their envy indeed still clings round them like a cloak, but they are content to lie forgotten and unnoticed, as if part of the rock against which they lean.

Their attitude too is symbolic: they are *seated*, and

this is as much part of their discipline as is the running of the Slothful two Terraces higher. True, they are blind and therefore, it may be said, unable to move or make progress in the better life. But the meaning goes beyond this. As Bacon in his Essay on Envy says, it is one of the most restless of all passions: 'A man that is busy and inquisitive is commonly envious. For to know much of other men's matters cannot be because all that ado may concern his own estate; therefore it must needs be that he taketh a kind of play-pleasure in looking upon the fortunes of others. Neither can he that mindeth but his own business find much matter for envy. For envy is a gadding passion, and walketh the streets, and doth not keep home: *Non est curiosus, quin idem sit malevolus.*' It may well be, therefore, that the first and perhaps hardest task of these souls is simply to learn to sit still, to break themselves of their restless habit of gadding about in search of news of their neighbours.

When Dante drew near, he found them singing the Litany:

> I heard a cry of, 'Mary, pray for us!'
> A cry of, 'Michael, Peter, and all Saints!'[1]

It is an appeal to those whose very life is the Love that envieth not, to help them to rise into their blessedness. Already, indeed, they have the faint beginnings of it—they sustain each other by leaning on one another's shoulders. It is not much, but at least the old envious desire to injure is slowly giving way to the spirit of mutual support and helpfulness.

Dante tells us further that he found them suffering three great penalties as consequences of the life of envy they had lived: they were clad in coarse haircloth; their eyes were sewed up with iron wire; and it was with difficulty they shed tears. The haircloth is something more than a garb of penance which a man puts on

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 50, 51. 'For *us*' implies that they have learnt to include their neighbours in their prayers. In Canto xv. 49-57 Virgil explains that in *spiritual* goods the more that can say 'ours,' the more each possesses. See p. 203.

and off at his will. It represents the inevitable, restless, tormenting pain and friction which envy cannot but inflict on the heart that harbours it. 'Of all other affections,' to quote Bacon again, 'it is the most importune and continual. For of other affections there is occasion given but now and then; and therefore it was well said, *Invidia festos dies non agit*: for it is ever working upon some or other. And it is also noted that love and envy do make a man pine, which other affections do not, because they are not so continual.' It is for this reason that Giotto paints his Envy of the Arena Chapel standing in flames—the tormenting fire which consumes the heart that allows itself to grow embittered at the prosperity of others.

The penalty, however, which draws forth Dante's deepest pity for these souls is their blindness: he wept as he saw them lean on one another's shoulders like blind beggars, to whom Heaven denies the bounty of its light:

> For all their eyelids an iron wire pierces,
> And sews them up, as to a sparhawk wild
> Is done, because it will not quiet stay.[1]

We may set aside the interpretation that with iron strength and resolution the penitent must keep his eyes closed to everything that might waken envy in his heart—the envious man being like a hawk which will dash at its prey unless its eyes are sewed up to keep it quiet. The sewing with iron wire is in reality the natural and inevitable penalty of envy. For Envy, as the word *Invidia* indicates, is a sin of the eyes.[2] It is the evil eye of Scripture; and it is written: 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.'[3] It could not be otherwise. A continual habit of envying our neighbours' prosperity, of searching for the evil alone in their life and character, of morose refusal to see and rejoice in the good of our own lot, cannot but sew up our eyes from the sunlight which God pours out un-

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 70-72.

[2] Spenser's Envy is clad in 'a kirtle of discolourd say,' '*ypaynted full of eies*' (Bk. I. Canto iv. 31).

[3] Matt. vi. 23.

grudgingly upon good and evil alike. It is, in another form, Giotto's recoil of Envy's serpent-tongue upon her own eyes, biting them into blindness. Dante uses still another figure when he compares it to a 'scum' upon the conscience, hindering the flow of that pure 'river of the mind' which will yet give them the vision of 'the Light on high.'[1]

One penalty remains—the difficulty of weeping out their penitence:

> who through the horrible stitching
> Were straining so that they bathed their cheeks.[2]

If the stitching were literal, the difficulty of straining out the tears would be, of course, a mere physical one; but, being symbolic, it must have another meaning. The eyes which once sinned by envious glances must, indeed, weep for their sin; but it is a sin which, in its very nature, hardens the heart, turns it to stone like Aglauros, and therefore weeping is not easy.

We turn now to the conversations Dante held with spirits on this Terrace: one with a lady of Siena, the other with two noblemen of Romagna. He draws attention to the relative positions of himself and Virgil, as if they had some special significance: Virgil walked between him and the embankment which sank down to the Terrace of Pride:

> Virgil was coming with me on that side
> Of the Cornice from which one may fall,
> Since by no border 'tis engarlanded.[3]

The reference to the possibility of falling over gives us the clue. Dante, as he walked along and looked at the souls of the Envious, was evidently conscious of a temptation to pride that he was so free of their particular vice. If he gave way to the temptation, it would mean that he fell over the edge of the Cornice on to that of Pride which he had just left. Virgil, therefore, in his symbolic character of Reason, walks between him and the edge: his own reason forbids him to fall into the greater sin, through pride that he is comparatively free from the lesser.

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 85-90. [2] *Purg.* xiii. 83, 84. [3] *Purg.* xiii. 79-81.

One other point may here be noted. In the two conversations recorded, Dante seems to have had but one species of Envy in his mind, and this, strange to say, political or 'public' envy, as Bacon calls it—that of individuals to their own city, or of one city to another. It is difficult to account for this, when we remember the prevalence of private forms of the vice. The reason is probably twofold. In the first place, Dante knew that Envy is one of the greatest public dangers. 'It is a disease in a state like to infection,' says Lord Bacon. 'For as infection spreadeth upon that which is sound, and tainteth it; so when envy is gotten once into a state, it traduceth even the best actions thereof, and turneth them into an ill odour.' It was, in Dante's view, one of the three great public vices which had left only two righteous men in his native city:

> 'The just are two, but there they are not heeded;
> Pride, Envy and Avarice are
> The three sparks which have set all hearts on fire.'[1]

In the next place, we must never forget, as we pass from Terrace to Terrace, that Dante has his own sins in view as well as those of others. He expressly denies great guilt so far as this sin is concerned; but he must have known that if there was any form of envy to which he was specially exposed, it was this public or political one. His bitter denunciations of the city which had banished him in his letters and in passage after passage of the *Commedia*, have certainly laid him open to the suspicion of having not merely yielded to the temptation, but been swept away by it. On this very Terrace, he puts into the lips of one of the spirits a denunciation of the whole valley of the Arno so bitterly scornful that it demands careful examination, if the poet is to be defended successfully from the charge of public envy.

It is essential to any right understanding of the matter to mark the way in which, at the very outset of the conversations, he strikes the high celestial key-note

[1] *Inf.* vi. 73-75. Compare also ll. 49-51. Villani (viii. 68) attributes the sins of Florence to the same sources—Pride, Envy, Avarice.

which lifts the whole subject far above the low atmosphere of political envies upon earth. Turning to the souls ranged up against the livid rock, he begs to know if there is among them one from Italy. The question implies that Dante has not yet risen completely superior to the distinctions and preferences of earthly citizenship, out of which public hates and envies grow. He is therefore met with a rebuke. A spirit sitting a little farther on 'lifted its chin as do the blind,' and answered:

> 'O brother mine, each one is citizen
> Of one true city; but thou wouldest say,
> Who may have lived in Italy a pilgrim.'[1]

This, indeed, is the thought with which the poet sustained his soul during the long and weary years of his earthly exile. He was in every sense 'a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.' His countrymen might cast him out of Florence, but they were powerless to close against him the gates of that true city, of which, to use his own words, he 'discerned at least the tower.'[2] It is the city to which Beatrice gives him welcome on the Mountain-top:

> 'And thou shalt be with me for evermore,
> A citizen of that Rome where Christ is Roman.'[3]

It is, undoubtedly, in the light of this citizenship in heaven that Dante means the following conversations to be read. Even the sternest denunciations of the cities of Italy are spoken by spirits who are already raised far above the agitation and bitterness of public envy which once moved them in the earthly life.

The gentle rebuke—'O brother mine'—gains force from the speaker of it. She is a lady of Siena, who is here cleansing away the malicious envy which she had borne to her native city:

> 'Sapient (*savia*) I was not, albeit I Sapia
> Was called, and I was at another's hurt
> More joyful than at mine own good fortune.'[4]

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[1] *Purg.* xiii. 94-96.

[2] *Purg.* xvi. 96.

[3] *Purg.* xxxii. 101, 102; Phil. iii. 20 (R.V.).

[4] *Purg.* xiii. 109-111. It is difficult to preserve in translation the play on *Savia* and *Sapia*. For her age—'descending the arch' (l. 114)—see

So insensate was her envy that it drove her to a blasphemous defiance of God. In 1269, when she was 'descending the arch of her life'—that is, when she was past five-and-thirty years of age, and therefore had no excuse of youthful folly—she prayed God for the defeat of her fellow-citizens by the Florentines at Colle, a town in the Valdelsa, about ten miles north-west of Siena. They *were* defeated, not because of her prayer, but because God had already willed it; and when she saw her countrymen in flight, she was so overjoyed that she defied God, as if, having received the dearest wish of her heart, she would need His help no more:

> 'I lifted up my daring face,
> Crying to God: "Henceforth no more I fear thee!"
> As did the blackbird for a little sunshine.'[1]

'The warm days near the end of January,' says Longfellow, 'are still called in Lombardy *I giorni della merla*, the days of the blackbird; from an old legend, that once in the sunny weather a blackbird sang, "I fear thee no more, O Lord, for the winter is over."' Sapia's feeling that all are citizens of one true city shows how far she has travelled from that envious state of soul in which her dearest prayer was for the defeat of her fellow-citizens on earth.

When exactly Sapia died seems to be uncertain, but whatever the date, as one who postponed repentance till the end of life, she ought still to be waiting in Ante-Purgatory on the lower slopes of the Mountain. Her presence here so far up is explained by the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man. Pier Pettignano (Peter the Combseller) was a poor Franciscan tertiary, to whom Sapia is said to have often given alms. So venerated was he in Siena for his piety and scrupulous honesty—he would never sell a comb which had the slightest flaw—that an altar was dedicated to him in the church of San Francesco. It was to the poor combseller's prayers of charity, so different from her own

Conv. iv. 23. It was at this battle of Colle in 1269 that Provenzano Salvani (p. 179) was slain. One cannot but notice how many Sienese Dante meets on these lower Terraces.

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 121-123.

envious ones, that the noble lady of Siena owed the shortening of her stay in Outer Purgatory.[1]

It is just at this point Dante declares that Envy was not one of his besetting sins. Sapia asks who is this who goes breathing and with eyes unsewn. And the poet's answer is that he must yet have his eyes sewed up on this Terrace, but not for long:

> 'Mine eyes,' I said, 'shall yet be here ta'en from me;
> But for short time, for small is the offence
> Committed by their being turned with envy.'[2]

Read in connection with Sapia's confession, this implies that Dante too had been tempted to envy his native city, and to pray for her defeat and ruin; and, as we have seen, many a passage in his writings seems conclusive against him. But here, on the Terrace of Envy itself, with its severe punishments before his eyes, he makes serious and solemn denial of guilt. If he denounced his native city, it was for her sins. He took no joy in her distresses and defeats. His noble forefather, Cacciaguida, warned him against this sin, and he is conscious that he had striven to obey him:

> 'I would not have thee envious to thy neighbours,
> Because thy life shall have a future
> Far beyond the punishment of their perfidies.'[3]

His comparative freedom from Envy, however, is no reason for glorying over these victims of it. Dante confesses humbly that Pride is his besetting sin; and this confession shows how carefully Virgil had stood between him and the edge of the Terrace.

The conversation ends with a reference to certain affairs of Siena. Dante asks Sapia if he can serve her in any way on his return to earth. In reply she begs two favours: his prayers, since only one beloved of God could visit the other world in the flesh; and the restoring of her fame among her kinsfolk in Tuscany:

> 'Thou wilt see them among that people vain
> Who hope in Talamone, and will lose there
> More hope than in discovering the Diana:
> But there still more the admirals will lose.'[4]

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[1] *Purg.* xiii. 125-129.
[2] *Purg.* xiii. 130-138.
[3] *Par.* xvii. 97-99.
[4] *Purg.* xiii. 151-154.

This cryptic utterance refers to certain public undertakings which were exciting great expectations among the Sienese, but which Sapia attributes to their vanity. To take things chronologically, 'the Diana' was the name given to a subterranean river which was believed to be the secret source of the famous fountain of Fonte Branda.[1] In 1295, the General Council of Siena passed a resolution to search for the hidden river, but it was not until some twenty years after Dante's death that it was found: when he wrote the present passage he evidently regarded it as a mere 'wild-goose chase.'[2] Still greater will be the disappointment, Sapia prophesies, in Talamone. This is the name of a little sea-port in the Sienese Maremma which the city purchased in 1303, in the vain hope of rivalling Pisa, Genoa, and Venice on the sea. After spending vast sums on it, they found it practically useless, partly on account of the harbour becoming silted up, and partly of the pestilential air of the Maremma, which is said to have caused the death of 'the admirals'—whether sea-captains in the ordinary sense, or, as many of the old commentators think, contractors for the construction of the harbour. It is not easy to say in what spirit Sapia referred to these events. Is it a flash of the old envy not yet quite subdued? It is at least more charitable to suppose that she is sending a warning word to her native city, and that its calamities grieve her now as much as formerly they made her glad. But there need be no doubt of Dante's estimate of the Sienese. He regards vanity as the key-note of their character; and it is probably for this reason that so many as three of them are singled out for mention on these two Terraces—Omberto Aldobrandeschi, Provenzano Salvani, and Sapia. Some species of vanity often lies at the root of both Pride and Envy.[3]

[1] The Fonte Branda of *Inf.* xxx. 78 is thought by some to be another fountain of the same name at Romena.

[2] 'A deep well, known as the "Pozzo Diana," . . . exists at the present time in the courtyard of the Convent of the Carmine in Siena. A document (dated Aug. 5, 1295) recording the resolution of the General Council to undertake the search for the Diana is still preserved in Siena' (Toynbee's *Dictionary*, p. 198). A sketch of the 'Pozzo Diana' in the Carmine is given in Mr. E. Gardner's *Story of Siena*, p. 259.

[3] In his *The Road in Tuscany* Mr. Maurice Hewlett calls attention to

We come now to the second of the two conversations, in which an equally severe judgment is passed on certain other parts of Italy, including Florence. Two spirits close by, who had overheard the conversation with Sapia, wonder who this may be who circles the Mount alive, and opens and shuts his eyes at pleasure. In reply to one of them Dante says he brings his body from the banks of a river which rises in Falterona, a peak of the Tuscan Apennines, and flows through a course of more than a hundred miles. As for himself, it were vain to tell him who he is, for as yet 'his name makes no great sound.' The first speaker, who is Guido del Duca, a Ghibelline nobleman of Brettinoro, a small town near Forlì, guesses at once that he is speaking of the Arno. His companion, Rinier da Calboli, a Guelph of Forlì, wonders why Dante conceals the name of the river as if it were some horrible thing. Whereupon Guido launches out into what certainly reads like an envenomed tirade against the entire valley. Its very name should perish. Virtue has been driven out from it as if it were a snake. Its inhabitants, from source to sea, have changed into brutes, 'as if Circe had them in her pasturing.' In the Casentino near the source, they are *brutti porci*, filthy hogs, the word *porci* pointing obviously to Porciano, a castle belonging to the Conti Guidi.[1] Further down live 'curs' which snarl when they cannot bite—the reference being to the city of Arezzo, from which the Arno 'turns its muzzle disdainfully away,' in allusion to the sudden twist it takes there from South-east to North-west. Then as the valley falls, its inhabitants

Dante's 'way of epitomising cities and nations in one figure—pathetic, terrible, monstrous, or lovely as may be, but standing, not without design, for the fortunes and features of his race.' To the Sienese he gave 'a kind of contemptuous pity: a gallant, feather-headed, high-flying, high-sniffing race, and altogether unlucky . . . Sapia, who defied God; Albero, who tried to fly; and in seven of the most lovely wailing lines ever penned by man, La Pia, the helpless, betrayed, unhappy, wedded girl. Here, before Time and Existence, stands Siena' (i. 49, 53; ii. 176, 199 ff.).

[1] A tradition has it that Dante was once imprisoned in the castle of Porciano. Two of his letters are dated from this place—'on the borders of Tuscany, under the source of the Arno': *Epis.* vi. denouncing the Florentines for opposing Henry VII., and *Epis.* vii. upbraiding Henry for his delay in attacking Florence.

fall with it—the dogs change to wolves, to which fierce and rapacious brutes Dante does not hesitate to compare his fellow-countrymen. In the *Inferno*, the wolf is the symbol of Avarice, a vice with which Dante again and again charges the Florentines. Finally, through deep gorges the river reaches Pisa, and there

> 'It finds the foxes so full of fraud
> That they fear no wit that may entrap them.'[1]

Then turning to his companion Rinier, Guido del Duca horrifies him with a prophecy of the cruelties his grandson Fulcieri da Calboli would practise on the Florentines, 'hunting those wolves on the bank of the fierce river,' selling their flesh while they are alive, slaughtering them like worn-out cattle, and leaving the wretched wood so utterly wasted that a thousand years will not replant it. This Fulcieri was made Podestà of Florence in 1302 by the Blacks after their return through the treachery of Charles of Valois. Villani calls him 'a fierce and cruel man,' and narrates the havoc he made of the party of the Whites, to which at that time Dante himself belonged. At this terrible news of his grandson's atrocities, Dante saw the face of Rinier grow sad and troubled, for the souls in Purgatory are not so completely severed from earth that the degeneracy of their offspring cannot wound them.[2]

Guido del Duca winds up with a bitter invective against his own province of Romagna. The good old times are dead and gone, whether 'for earnest or for pastime.'

> 'For all within these boundaries is full
> Of venomous roots, so that tardily now
> Would they by cultivation be made less.'

It would serve no purpose to go over the long roll of good men and true—'the good Lizio and Arrigo Main-

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 16-54. Longfellow thinks Dante had in mind a passage in the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius, iv. Pros. 3, in which it is shown how vices degrade men into various kinds of beasts—wolf, dog, fox, etc.

[2] *Purg.* xiv. 55-72. Aristotle thinks the dead are very slightly affected by the acts of their descendants—they cannot make them happy if they are not happy, nor deprive them of their felicity if they are (*Ethics*, i. 11).

ardi,' and the rest, whom Guido remembers as the pride of Romagna in the old days.[1] As Plumptre says, they 'bring out what one may call the archæological element of Dante's mind, the love of old-world stories, which were fused by his genius into materials for his poem. To us these names are like old coins on which we can scarcely trace the image and superscription. To him they were, as the Border-legends were to Scott, full of life, associated with memories of romantic scenes, and stories which he had heard from the lips of eye-witnesses.'[2] From the ethical point of view Dante's aim appears to be to show the change for the better which has come over the spirit of the speaker. On earth, envy burned in him like a flame:

> 'My blood was so with envy set on fire,
> That if I had seen a man make him joyful,
> Thou wouldst have seen me with lividness o'erspread.'[3]

Now all this is changed. That which moves his grief is not the prosperity of others, but their sin. He begs Dante to pass on and let him weep:

> 'But go thy way now, Tuscan, for now it me delights
> Far more to weep than it doth to speak,
> So much hath our discourse my mind distressed.'[4]

Doubtless this describes Dante's own mood; as he thought of the woeful state of his country, his tears lay not far beneath his indignation.

It is immediately after parting company with these 'dear souls' that Dante is startled, as we have already seen, into taking one backward step by the thunder-peals of God's judgment upon Envy. In a curious astronomical passage, into which we need not enter, he tells us that the hour was now three o'clock in the afternoon. They were going direct westward, and

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 91-126.

[2] Mr. Hewlett has the same idea expressed in more picturesque language. 'There was the ballad-monger in him [Dante] fast enough, down deep at the root of him. In a substantial sense his poem is a string of ballads, and, in that sense only, an epic. I don't think the man can ever be understood, until that fact about him is accepted.' And then he gives examples. The whole passage is well worth reading (*The Road in Tuscany*, i. 40-46).

[3] *Purg.* xiv. 82-84.

[4] *Purg.* xiv. 124-126.

the afternoon sun struck them straight in the face—'in the middle of the nose,' as it is put.[1] Suddenly some new splendour far beyond the sunlight made him raise his hand to shield his eyes. But even this was in vain: as a sunbeam is thrown from water or a mirror in the opposite direction at the same angle at which it fell, and with equal brightness, so this strange brilliance leaped up from the ground into his face. In reply to his astonished question, Virgil says it is no wonder he cannot yet gaze on 'the family of heaven':[2] it is the Angel of the Terrace coming to invite them up.

As usual, the commentators spend a great deal of time explaining Dante's harmless little piece of scientific vanity over his knowledge of the law of the angles of incidence and reflection, and leave unexplained what was his chief concern, the ethical law of which all this is the mere symbol. To begin with, one cannot but be struck with the obvious contrast between this Angel of Goodwill, as we may call him in opposition to Envy, and that of Humility on the Terrace beneath. The face of the latter was 'like a tremulous morning star,' beginning to fade humbly away in the rising sun, 'the glory that excelleth.' But this Angel outshines the sun, or rather, adds a new glory to it. The sun, as we have seen, is regarded on this Terrace as the opposite of Envy—the symbol of the free unenvying love of God, which shines impartially on good and evil. On their first arrival on the Terrace, it was to the sun Virgil turned for guidance; and now the purifying discipline has brought them face to face with it once more. It is the same sun, but with a difference. The Angel of Brotherly Love stands in it and gives a new and marvellous brilliance to its rays. The very ground, which was before but livid rock, is changed into a mirror which reflects the heavenly light. It is an obvious symbol of the transfiguration of heaven and earth which takes place when envy is expelled by love.

[1] *Purg.* xv. 1-9.

[2] *Purg.* xv. 29. The word *famiglia* implies the absence of envy in heaven: as members of one celestial household, each rejoices in the others' good.

'Day is added unto day,' and sunlight unto sunlight. Dante feels that his eyes are not yet able to bear this splendour of love which shines from 'the family of heaven.' Envy is a sin of the eyes, and weakens even when it does not blind them.

The Angel, joyful that Dante is ready to ascend, shows them the stairway to the Third Terrace, far less steep than any they have yet climbed. Although it is not expressly stated, we must assume that the P of Envy is erased from Dante's brow—if not by a stroke of the Angel's wing, perhaps by the burning sunlight of his countenance. As they enter the passage they hear the Second Beatitude sung behind them:

BEATI MISERICORDES,

and the words, 'Rejoice, thou that overcomest!'—an expression probably of the joy of the souls left behind at Dante's purification. They have so far overcome envy that they cannot grudge him the release of which they themselves are not yet worthy.

While they climb the stairs, Dante, as his custom is, seeks to profit by his companion's words. Something said by Guido del Duca had remained as a problem in his mind, and he now asks Virgil to explain it:

> 'What did the spirit of Romagna mean,
> Mentioning "interdict" and "partnership"?'

Guido's words were:

> 'O human race, why dost thou set the heart
> There where interdict of partnership must be?'[1]

Virgil's answer is to this effect: 'Most men set their hearts on temporal and material goods, and the greater the number who claim partnership in these, the smaller grows the share for each.[2] But exactly the opposite holds true of spiritual goods, the greatest of which is Love. The more Love is shared, the more there is for all. The more one can say *Our*, the more each possesses. The reason is this. The infinite goodness of God flies

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 86, 87; xv. 44, 45.
[2] Comp. Boethius, *De Cons. Phil.* ii. Pros. v.

to the heart that loves, and in proportion to the ardour of its love, even as the sunlight to some bright object, such as a mirror, that is able to reflect it. Hence the greater the number of mirror-like souls reflecting to each other the eternal good in love, the more is that good multiplied by the simple process of sharing it. If the sense is hard to understand, if mere Reason cannot explain it, Beatrice, the Heavenly Wisdom, will make it plain; let Dante hasten to reach her by striving more eagerly to cleanse his brow of the five remaining wounds.' In other words, a great truth like this can perhaps be understood by no mere process of reasoning, but only by that purifying of the heart which creates at once the light and the eyes by which we see it.[1]

[1] *Purg.* xv. 46-81. See *Conv.* iii. 7.

CHAPTER XIV

Terrace III—Anger

Before Dante has time to express his satisfaction with Virgil's exposition of the 'interdict of partnership,' he finds himself upon the Third Terrace, and is rapt suddenly into a series of 'ecstatic visions,' which form the 'whip' to urge the souls on in pursuit of the special virtue of this Cornice. The mode of trance is no device adopted for the sake of variety: as in the other Terraces, it has a close symbolic correspondence to the sin which is to be cleansed away. The Angry, as we shall see presently, are enveloped in a thick smoke, as dark as hell and night, and therefore no appeal can be made to their *eyes*, as in the case of the Proud. It is partly through their *ears* that the Envious sinned, and therefore their ears are used for their purification. But Anger is largely a sin of the *imagination*. The angry man sets his imagination to work round and round some slight or wrong, fancied or real, until by brooding on it, he is rapt away by his own inner vision, and loses the power to observe external things. Hence the apostrophe to the imagination in the beginning of Canto xvii.:

> O thou Imagination, that dost steal us
> So from without sometimes, that one is not aware,
> Even tho' around may sound a thousand trumpets.

The moral conception is that the very imagination must be redeemed and purified, 'a light which in the heaven takes form' must move it with 'ecstatic visions' of nobler things. The fact that Dante himself seems to have had in an extraordinary degree this power of trance-like abstraction from external things, would

render him doubly conscious of the danger of yielding his imagination to be the sport of visions and dreams of angry and revengeful passions.[1]

Three visions pass in succession before the inward eye—examples of Meekness under varying degrees of provocation. As usual, the first instance is drawn from the Virgin's life. In his trance, Dante sees Mary standing in the Temple-gate, addressing her gentle question to Jesus 'with the sweet gesture of a mother': 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.'[2] But this, though the first is by no means the highest example of meekness, for it is the patience of a mother to a son for having put her to trouble and anxiety. The second vision takes the higher range of a father's gentleness to a stranger who had openly insulted his daughter. The story is meant to illustrate the height to which Pagan virtue could rise. A young man, carried away by his love for the daughter of Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens, kissed her in public. In his vision Dante sees the maiden's mother with indignant tears demanding from her husband vengeance for the insult. Pisistratus replies gently:

> 'What shall we do to those who wish us ill,
> If he who loves us be by us condemned?'[3]

This, however, is only meekness to one who loves us; the crowning example is to those who hate. The third vision is the martyrdom of St. Stephen: the infuriated mob pouring the stones on him with cries of 'Kill, Kill!' and the 'young man,' with the eyes of which 'he made gates to heaven,' praying for pardon on his murderers.[4] The rising scale of meekness in the three visions is obvious: the first is gentleness to a son and for a mere annoyance; the second is quiet submission to a public

[1] Compare Boccaccio's story of Dante at Siena, p. 53.

[2] Luke ii. 48.

[3] *Purg.* xv. 104, 105.

[4] *Purg.* xv. 106-114; Acts vii. 54-60. Scartazzini thinks Stephen is here called 'a young man' through a confusion with Saul, the 'young man' of Acts vii. 58, at whose feet the witnesses laid their garments. Dr. Moore rightly sets this aside: Dante follows the traditional representation of Stephen in Christian Art (*Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 84).

insult, but an insult which sprang from love; the third is forgiveness of the deadly malice of enemies.

The incident which follows is Dante's confession of his own proneness to the sin of Anger. He positively staggers under the impossible demands of these visions; and Virgil gives him a sharp rebuke, when he wakes, for the way in which he has been reeling along the Terrace:

> 'What ails thee, that thou canst not hold thyself,
> But hast been coming more than half a league
> Veiling thine eyes, and with thy legs entangled,
> In guise of one whom wine or sleep bows down?'[1]

We do not need to believe Boccaccio's story of Dante's flinging stones in a passion of rage at women and children, in order to be convinced that his nature, temperament, and fortunes must have laid him peculiarly open to storms of anger. A proud and sensitive man, accused of a disgraceful crime, driven forth to homeless wandering exile, his strong sense of justice outraged at every turn, it is certainly no wonder if he staggered under the demands of the three visions to forgive annoyance, insult, the deadliest malice of enemies. At first his instinct is to excuse himself to Virgil—the very telling of the visions will prove how impossible the virtue is. But Virgil makes short work of his self-excuses—he could see through them 'if he had a hundred masks upon his face.' The very purpose of the visions is to deprive him of all excuse 'to open his heart to the waters of peace which flow from the eternal fountain': the meaning probably being that we cannot be at peace with God until we are at peace with man.

> 'Thus must we needs urge on the sluggards, slow
> To use their wakefulness when it returns.'[2]

In other words, it is a dangerous thing to rest in mere dreams of virtue, or to be 'disobedient to the heavenly vision.' On the next Terrace we shall find Dante con-

[1] *Purg.* xv. 120-123. Plumptre connects this with 'the dreaminess of the poet's temperament,' but this is too general and misses its relation to this Terrace of Anger.

[2] *Purg.* xv. 127-138.

fessing that slothfulness in pursuit of what he knows to be good, is another of his besetting sins.

We come now to the punishment allotted to the Angry. As the poets walked westward against the setting sun, a smoke which covered the whole width of the Terrace met them—an image of that darkening of the reason, and the moral faculties, and all the plain reality of things, which Anger creates. It reminds Dante of his passage through the Inferno—the 'darkness of hell' and of a starless night. Indeed, his journey had already led him through the same dark smoke—the foggy exhalations of the Stygian Fen in whose miry waters the Wrathful tear each other.[1] It is, indeed, so natural an image of Anger that the word *fume* or smoke is a familiar figure of speech in this sense—a man 'fumes with anger.' The passion burns like a fire in the heart and throws off a thick smoke which blinds and bites the eyes. Its blinding power is familiar enough. 'Anger is a short madness.' While the passion lasts, it can see no excuse, no palliation of the offence, no rational limit to its vengeance. It often turns into a blind fury which shuts its eyes to all consequences to itself and others. A less familiar form of this blindness springs from a source seldom thought of, which Aquinas points out, namely, that Anger generally believes itself to be founded upon reason and justice. It is a longing for vengeance for some wrong, and it usually justifies itself by the thought that it is simply inflicting a well-merited punishment upon a sinner. This sense of justice often blinds the angry man to the true measures and proportions of justice: the balance trembles in the hands of passion, and dips to the side of excessive punishment. Thus the very sense of justice becomes an ally of this sin, and changes into a thick smoke which blinds the reason. 'Hence Gregory says: "The greatest care must be taken that anger, which is taken up for an instrument of virtue, come not to have dominion over the mind, nor rule as mistress there; but like a hand-maid ready to serve, let her know her place at the back

[1] *Inf.* ix. 75.

of reason's chair." Anger such as this, although in the execution of the deed it does to some extent impede the judgment of reason, still does not destroy the rectitude of reason. Hence Gregory says that "the anger of zeal troubles the eye of reason, but the anger of vice quite blinds it."'[1]

The pain and restlessness of Anger are symbolized by the bitterness and 'rough texture' of the smoke, which suffered not an eye to remain open. Aquinas, indeed, discussing the question, *Does anger cause pleasure?* replies that it does, partly by the hope of revenge, partly by brooding on it, and, if the hope is fulfilled, by the infliction of it.[2] Nevertheless the pleasure cannot really be very great when we turn to what he calls the six 'daughters of Anger': brawling, swelling of spirit, contumely, clamour, indignation, and blasphemy. The followers of Wrath, according to Spenser, are not a merry company:

> Full many mischiefes follow cruell Wrath:
> Abhorred bloodshed, and tumultuous strife,
> Unmanly murder, and unthrifty scath,
> Bitter despight, with rancours rusty knife,
> And fretting griefe, the enemy of life:
> All these, and many evils moe haunt ire,
> The swelling Splene, and Frenzy raging rife,
> The shaking Palsey, and Saint Fraunces fire.[3]

When this bitter blinding smoke closed in round Dante, Virgil, his 'wise and trusty Escort,' drew near and offered him his shoulder, bidding him take care not to be separated from him; and thus, like a blind man, he followed him through the darkness. Virgil, of course, sustains here his allegorical character of Reason. For, as Aquinas says, anger in itself is not necessarily a sin, as envy is. For 'envy from its species involves evil: for it is sadness at another's good, of itself an irrational thing; and therefore the mere mention of envy points at once to something evil. But this is not the case with anger, or the craving for vengeance: for vengeance may be sought either well or ill . . . To seek

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clviii. a. i.
[2] *Summa*, i-ii. q. xlviii. a. 1.
[3] *Faerie Queene*, Bk. i. C. iv. 35.

vengeance in order to work evil on him who has to be punished, is unlawful; but to seek vengeance in order to work the correction of vice and the maintenance of the good of justice, is praiseworthy.' 'The passion of anger is useful . . . to the end that man may more promptly fulfil what reason dictates'; hence 'to be devoid of anger when one ought to be angry' is as much a vice upon the other side. But Anger of every kind must keep its hand on Reason's shoulder and walk behind him, for he alone knows when, and how, and in what measure to be angry. To quote Aristotle, Dante's chief authority upon natural ethics: 'A person is praised if he grows angry on the right occasion and with the right people, and also in the right manner, at the right times and for the right length of time; such a person will be good-tempered therefore, as good temper is a term of praise. For a good-tempered person is in effect one who will be cool and not carried away by his emotion, but will wax wroth in such a manner, on such occasions, and for so long a time, as reason may prescribe. But it seems that he will err rather on the side of deficiency; for a good-tempered or gentle person is inclined to forgiveness rather than to revenge.'[1] All this is what Dante means by following Virgil with his hand on his shoulder, and listening to no voice but his.

Nevertheless, important as this is, there is another aid even more essential. Out of the darkness came the sound of voices chanting in unison a prayer to the Lamb of God who taketh away sin, for peace and mercy:

> Only '*Agnus Dei*' were their preludes;
> One word there was in all, and measure one,
> So that all concord seemed to be among them.[2]

The reference is to the Litany of the Saints. The penitents are 'unloosing the knot of anger' in which they are entangled, by casting themselves on the meek and gentle Lamb of God whose sacrifice is their salvation.

[1] Aquinas, *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clviii.; Aristotle's *Ethics*, iv. 11 (Welldon).

[2] *Purg.* xvi. 16-21. The reference is to the prayer in the Mass and the Litany of the Saints: 'Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.'

They know that only He who laid down life for their forgiveness can lift them up into the power of His own forgiving love. The concord with which they chant the '*Agnus Dei*'—one word and one measure in them all—shows that already something of His peace and mercy is in their hearts. The brawling, and contumely, and clamour, and blasphemy, which are among 'the daughters of Anger,' are banished from their lips by the unison of the one word and the one measure of the one prayer for each other's salvation. It is the fulfilment of St. Paul's words, which may well have been in Dante's mind: 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'[1]

At this point one of the penitents hearing Dante ask if these were spirits who were chanting, demands who they are who discuss them as if they 'still divided time by calends'—a form of the question natural to souls living in a darkness unbroken by sun or moon into days and months. Dante asks him to follow and he will hear, and the spirit promises to go as far as he is permitted—that is, as it turns out, to the edge of the smoke. The poet then tells him he is still in the flesh, 'the swathing band which death unwindeth,' and that he had come hither through 'the infernal anguish.' Two questions he asks him—first, who he was on earth; and second, whether they were going in the right direction for the way up, for even Virgil was uncertain. He receives an answer which gives rise to a long dissertation on the mystery of free-will:

> 'A Lombard was I, and was called Marco;
> The world I knew, and that worth I loved
> At which has each one now unbent his bow.
> For mounting upward thou art going right'—[2]

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[1] Eph. iv. 31, 32.

[2] *Purg.* xvi. 46-49. Villani (vii. 121) tells how Count Ugolino of Pisa, having showed this Marco the magnificent preparations for his birthday feast, and asked his opinion of them, received the reply: 'You are better prepared for evil fortune than any baron of Italy.' When the Count

for this soul can point the way it cannot yet go. So little is known of this Marco that it is uncertain whether 'Lombardo' indicates his nationality or his family name. The probability is in favour of the former, though some of the early commentators speak of him as a member of the family of the Lombardi of Venice. His presence here implies that he was easily moved to anger, but otherwise he bears the name of having been a man of great learning, courtesy, and virtue. Several stories are told of him which show that he had a witty and caustic tongue; and indeed his conversation here proves that it has not yet lost its edge. Meantime, evidently impressed by the Divine grace shown to Dante, he begs for his prayers when he reaches Paradise. The poet promises, but begs him in turn to resolve a doubt with which he is 'bursting inwardly.' It rose partly from Guido del Duca's words in the last Terrace about the degeneracy of Italy, and partly out of Marco's own statement that men no longer bent the bow to aim at virtue. What Dante is so eager to know is the cause of this decay of morals,

'For one in the heavens places it, another here below.'

In other words, is the general worsening of the world a necessity imposed on it by the stars, or is it the result of man's own depravity? The question tells Marco that Dante has indeed come from a blind world—a world that seeks to excuse its evil by referring everything to a fatal necessity imposed on it by the stars.[1] This, replies the Lombard, would destroy free-will, and with it all moral responsibility; there would be no justice

'In having joy for good, or grief for evil.'

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asked why, Marco replied: 'Because there is nothing lacking save the anger of God'—and this, according to Villani, was not lacking long (see *Inf.* xxxii. 124 ff.).

[1] Compare Edmund's soliloquy in *King Lear* (Act i. Sc. 2): 'This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeit of our own behaviour,—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on.'

True, he says, the heavens initiate our movements, though not all. This, indeed, is one of Dante's most fundamental conceptions. He speaks of the nine spheres which circle round the earth as

> 'the great wheels
> Which direct every seed unto some end,
> According as the stars are its companions.'[1]

From his exposition of the spheres in the Second Canto of the *Paradiso* and other passages, it is clear that Dante has no idea that the stars impose any fatal necessity upon man. The nine spheres are conceived of simply as the means of transmission of Divine power, wisdom, and love to the human race. Further, they do not transmit everything,—the human soul comes direct from its Maker's hand. But, says Marco, even if the heavens did initiate every movement, that would not determine irrevocably the whole after-course of human destiny. Three things may alter it. In the first place, the light of reason and conscience to distinguish between good and evil; in the second place, freedom to choose one or other; and lastly, this freedom itself is subject 'to a greater power and to a better nature' than that of the stars, and this subjection of our freedom to God creates in us a mind which the stars have not in their charge.[2]

The cause, then, of the general corruption is not in the heavens but in men themselves, and Marco proceeds to trace it specifically to the evil guidance of the Papacy. He begins with a passage of great beauty descriptive of the innocent joy with which the human soul passes direct from God into the earthly life:

> Forth from the hand of Him who with joy beholds it
> Before it is, in fashion of a little maid
> Weeping and laughing in her childish sport,
> Issues the simple soul, that nothing knows,
> Save that, set in motion by a joyous Maker,
> Willingly it turns to that which gives it pleasure.'

Never, surely, was the doctrine of the human soul expressed with greater beauty. It reminds us of Vaughan's

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 109-111. [2] *Purg.* xvi. 64-81.

'angell-infancy' with its 'white celestiall thoughts,' and Wordsworth's

> 'trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home.'

The simple unknowing joy of the newborn soul is the joy of its Maker. Before its creation it exists in the Divine idea, and there God contemplates it with delight. When it passes forth from His hand into the earthly existence, His joy goes with it and makes it turn willingly to whatever gives it pleasure. But in its childish ignorance it runs after every trivial and delusive good, the object of desire ever changing as life passes from stage to stage. 'Whence,' as he says in the *Convito*, 'we see little children desire above all things an apple; and then, proceeding further on, desire a little bird; and then, further on, desire a beautiful garment; and then a horse, and then a wife; and then riches, not great, then great, and then very great.'[1]

To restrain this foolish wandering of desire and lead it home to its true end in God, two things are necessary: first, the bridle of laws, and second, a firm hand to hold the bridle,

> 'a king who should discern
> Of the true city at the least the tower,'—

the bulwarks of the eternal righteousness. The bridle of laws did, indeed, exist, but there was no hand to hold it. The reason given by Marco is a very curious one:

> 'Because the shepherd who precedes
> Can chew the cud, but has not the hooves divided.'

In other words, the Pope is an unclean animal, according to the Mosaic Law. We have here a piece of pure mediæval allegorizing. 'The dividing of the hoof,' says Aquinas, 'signifies the distinction of the two testaments, or of Father and Son, or of the two natures in Christ,

[1] *Purg.* xvi. 85-93; *Conv.* iv. 12. For the joy and happiness of God in Himself and in all good, see Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, Bk. i. chaps. 90, 100-102. The doctrine of the soul here advocated is that of Creationism (its direct creation by the hand of God), against Traducianism (its transmission by natural generation). Dante follows Aquinas (*Summa*, i. q. xc.; *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 87-89): see *Purg.* xxv. 61-78; *Par.* vii. 142-144.

or the discrimination of good and evil; but the chewing of the cud signifies meditation of the Scriptures and the sound understanding of them.'[1] Dante, however, has his own interpretation of the cloven hoof. The Pope —who, we must remember, was Boniface VIII.—could indeed chew the cud of meditation upon the Scriptures; but in the cleaving of the hoof he failed in two directions. First, in the practice of morals; for according to St. Augustine the doing of right is like the animal's cloven hoof, it has a better hold of the ground and prevents slipping and falling. It is the evil guidance of the Papacy which has corrupted the world: when the people see their shepherd aiming at what they hunger for themselves, 'they feed on that, and ask no further.'[2] In the second place, the Pope refused to divide the hoof by distinguishing between the temporal and spiritual powers, and assigning to each its sphere, as in the better days of old:

> 'Rome, that made the world good, was wont
> Two suns to have, which one road and the other,
> Of the world and of God, made plain to sight.
> The one the other has quenched, and the sword is joined
> With the crook; and the one together with the other
> Of sheer necessity must needs go ill;
> Because, being joined, one feareth not the other.
> If thou believe me not, consider well the ear,
> For every herb is known by the seed.'[3]

This is Dante's political creed which he reasons out in the *De Monarchia*, and especially in Book III., the argument of which is that the authority of the Emperor is derived immediately from God and not from His Vicar, as the Pope held. The Papal claim to the temporal power was a comparatively modern usurpation. In the earlier and better times, Rome was illuminated by two suns—the Emperor, shining on the pathway of the present life and world, and the Pope, the appointed guide to eternal blessedness in God. 'Therefore,' says the *De Monarchia*, 'man had need of two guides for his life, as he had a twofold end in life; whereof one is

[1] Lev. xi. 3; *Summa*, i-ii. q. cii. a. 6.
[2] *Purg.* xvi. 94-105.
[3] *Purg.* xvi. 106-114.

the Supreme Pontiff, to lead mankind to eternal life, according to the things revealed to us; and the other is the Emperor, to guide mankind to happiness in this world in accordance with the teaching of philosophy.'[1] In the figure of the two suns, however, Dante goes a step beyond the position he held in his political treatise. There he did not challenge the well-known comparison of the two powers to the sun and moon; he did not even deny that the Emperor is the lesser light, deriving part of his illumination from the greater. What he does deny is that the moon is dependent on the sun for its being, its power, or its operation. 'Its motion comes from its proper mover, its influence is from its own rays. For it has a certain light of its own, which is manifest at the time of an eclipse; though for its better and more powerful working it receives from the sun an abundant light, which enables it to work more powerfully. Therefore I say that the temporal power does not receive its being from the spiritual power, nor its power which is its authority, nor its working considered in itself. Yet it is good that the temporal power should receive from the spiritual the means of working more effectively by the light of the grace which the benediction of the Supreme Pontiff bestows on it both in heaven and on earth . . . Let, therefore, Cæsar be reverent to Peter, as the first-born son should be reverent to his father, that he may be illuminated by his father's grace, and so may be stronger to lighten the world over which he has been placed by Him alone, who is the ruler of all things spiritual as well as temporal.'[2] In the present Canto this qualified superiority of the Papacy appears to be repudiated: the two powers are 'two suns,' each supreme in its own sphere.[3] When this independence is not respected, and the sword joined to the crozier, 'one feareth not the other,' and the necessary check is removed. The Pope should be restrained by the civil power in civil matters; the Emperor by the spiritual power in things spiritual;

[1] *De Mon.* iii. 16. [2] *De Mon.* iii. 4, 16 (Church).
[3] See *Epis.* vii. 2, where Henry VII. is called 'our sun.'

and when the two powers are in one hand, the result is disastrous.[1] In proof Marco points to the moral degradation of Lombardy and upper Italy in general, brought about by the long struggle between Frederick II. and the Papacy. In all the territory between the Adige and the Po, only three good men are left, to long for the time when God will restore them to the better life:

> 'Corrado da Palazzo, and the good Gherardo,
> And Guido da Castel, who is better named,
> In fashion of the French, the simple Lombard.'[2]

Marco finishes his long speech by declaring that this deplorable state of things springs from the refusal of the Papacy to divide the hoof, to recognize the separate jurisdictions of the two powers: the undivided hoof can take no firm grip of the ground, and, like an unclean animal, the Church falls into the mire with its double burden of the two governments which it has confounded. 'And now,' says Dante,

> discern I why from the heritage
> The sons of Levi were excluded—

that they might not be drawn away by the possessions of the world from the performance of their spiritual duties. More than once Dante denounces the 'Donation of Constantine' as the beginning of the Church's lapse into worldliness and ambition. Even if Constantine had the right—which Dante denies—to give the lands and temporal power of the West to the Church, 'the Vicar of God could receive such things, not to possess them, but as a steward to dispense the fruits of them to the poor of Christ, on behalf of the

[1] For a discussion of the Papal claim to possess the 'two swords' of Luke xxii. 38—the temporal and spiritual powers—see *De Mon.* iii. 9, a chapter which shows, as Wicksteed says, 'how entirely capable he [Dante] was of sweeping away allegorical subtleties and taking the plain sense of the text when it suited him.'

[2] *Purg.* xvi. 121-126. Toynbee is probably right in thinking that 'the simple Lombard' has some special significance. In French 'Lombart' meant *usurer*—compare our 'Lombard Street,' and the 'Rue des Lombards' in Paris. According to the *Ottimo Comento*, this Guido da Castel was most hospitable to travellers to and from France, aiding them freely with 'horses, arms, and money.' This was a new kind of usurer, and his French friends may have called him playfully 'the simple Lombard' (*Dante Studies and Researches*, p. 265).

Church, as we know the Apostles did.'[1] Whatever view we take of Dante's political creed, the character and conduct of Boniface VIII. justify to the full his denunciation of the union of the sword and crozier for which this utterly worldly Pontiff fought with an ambition almost insane and wholly unscrupulous. His angry exclamation to the envoys of the Emperor Albert, 'I, I am the Emperor!' has been already quoted. Priestly arrogance can scarcely go further than his declaration in his Bull *Unam Sanctam*, that subjection to the Roman Pontiff is necessary for salvation. The consequences of this 'confounding of two governments' were disastrous, as Dante here foretells. To use his figure, the undivided hoof brought the unclean animal and its burden to the ground, and covered it with shame and mire. The outrage at Anagni and the Babylonish captivity at Avignon, were the natural fruits of the worldliness and ambition of 'the great-hearted sinner,' as he has been called; and his tomb, as Gregorovius says, is 'the gravestone of the mediæval Papacy, which was buried with him by the forces of the age.'[2]

At this point, Marco Lombardo bids the poets farewell—'God be with you.' He can go no further, for he has reached the edge of the smoke, and through the mist he sees the dim light of 'dawn'—the shining of the Angel of the Terrace. He is not yet so purified of the darkness of Anger that his eyes can bear the light of his gentle and holy face: he sees him only as a vague whiteness. Dante, it appears, is not yet able to see even this; all that meets his sight as he emerges is the setting sun breaking through the smoke, as when a mist clears among the Alps. The reason seems to be that his anger is not yet held in by the curb of fear, he has not yet seen the visions of unholy wrath which constitute the 'bridle' of this passion. Once more as at the beginning of this Terrace his imagination throws him into a trance so deep that the sounding of a

[1] *Purg.* xvi. 131-132; Numb. xviii. 23, 24; *De Mon.* iii. 10, 14. See *Purg.* xxxii. 124-129, p. 477.

[2] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 597 (English Translation).

thousand trumpets would have passed unheard,—a figure of the way in which the passion of unholy anger snatches the soul away from the sense of the world of external realities, and wraps it in its own insane dreams and delusions. In Dante's case, however, they are not insanities; he is walking side by side with Virgil who is Reason, and his imagination is moved by 'a light which in the heaven takes form.'[1]

The first vision of the 'bridle' comes from heathen story, and shows the wild and awful 'impiety' into which the frenzy of anger sweeps the soul. 'Impiety' here does not mean wickedness in general, but the violation of the natural bonds of blood and kinship which knit families together. The story is that of the hideous revenge taken by Procne, daughter of Pandion, King of Athens, upon her husband Tereus for his cruel outrage on her sister Philomela. All the natural feelings of motherhood swept away by her fury, she slew her son Itys, and served him up to his father at a feast. When Tereus, learning this, pursued the sisters to slay them, the three were changed by the gods into birds —Tereus into a hoopoe or hawk, Philomela into a swallow, and Procne into a nightingale, 'the bird that most delights in singing.' The 'impiety' which Dante saw in vision was probably the murder of Itys and the eating of his flesh by his father, an awful example of the way in which the fury of anger outrages and violates the most sacred affections of the human heart.[2]

Nevertheless, though Procne's 'wild justice of revenge' drove her to excess, she had at least the excuse of the most cruel provocation. The second example seems chosen because the provocation was out of all proportion to the revenge contemplated. The vision of it 'rained' down from heaven, Dante says, probably to indicate that it is taken from Scripture. He sees

[1] *Purg.* xvi. 141-xvii. 18. Note that the examples of Anger are shown only when Dante has come out into the light: not until we have escaped from the fume and smoke of this passion are we able to see clearly the ruin it works.

[2] *Purg.* xvii. 19-24. The story is told by Ovid, *Met.* vi. 412-676.

Haman on a cross, scornful and fierce in the very article of death, while round him stand Ahasuerus, Esther, and 'the just Mordecai.' The point here is the trifling nature of the offence and the sweeping scope of the vengeance planned. Mordecai's refusal to bow down to the king's favourite was an insult which could not be wiped out with the blood of one man. Haman 'thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone':[1] the whole Jewish race in Persia must die. Dante compares the vanishing of the vision from his imagination to the breaking of a bubble 'of itself' 'when the water it was made of fails'—a fine image of the way in which Haman's revenge, overblown by his angry pride, burst like a bubble of itself. His vengeance overreached itself and recoiled on his own head: 'So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.'[2]

Procne's anger was that of outraged love; Haman's of overblown pride. The third vision shows the disastrous effects of anger against Heaven's decree. Dante sees Lavinia weeping bitterly, and reproaching her mother Amata for having rashly and impatiently taken away her own life. The story is taken from Virgil. Lavinia, daughter of Latinus, King of Latium, and Amata, was first betrothed to Turnus, King of the Rutulians, but afterwards given in marriage to Æneas, against her mother's will. War followed between the two heroes, in the course of which a false rumour that Turnus was slain threw Amata into such a frenzy of grief that she straightway hanged herself, without waiting for confirmation of the report. At first sight, it seems as if this was nothing more than the anger of hastiness and impatience; but Dante's thought goes deeper. In his famous Letter to Henry VII., he compares Florence to Amata. As the Latian queen rejected the marriage of her daughter with Æneas decreed by Heaven, so did Florence resist the ordinance of God in

[1] Esther iii. 6.

[2] *Purg.* xvii. 25-33; Esther vii. 10. Dante's 'crucified' (l. 26) is explained by the word *crux* in the Vulgate of Esther v. 14, where the A.V. has 'gallows': 'jussit excelsam parari crucem.'

her impious refusal to receive Henry as her lawful king. Dante warns her that she is simply bringing on herself the same fate of suicide: 'the infuriated woman doth but await the halter wherewith to noose herself.' In short, Æneas was to Dante, as to Virgil, the Heaven-ordained founder of Rome, and Lavinia the wife decreed to him 'from Italy, the noblest region of Europe,' to be 'the mother of Albans and Romans alike.' As Procne was guilty of impiety against man, so Amata, in opposing this marriage, necessary for the fulfilment of Heaven's purpose of founding Rome to be the head and home of both Church and Empire, was guilty of an impiety against God, which was punished by a suicidal frenzy of anger. It was, in Dante's regard, a crime against the Roman race parallel to that of Haman against the chosen people of God.[1]

'Purified by pity and fear,' by these tragedies, to use Aristotle's famous phrase,[2] Dante is now somewhat prepared to meet the shining Angel of Meekness. The brilliance of his face wakes him from his visions of Anger, as sleep is broken by a sudden light. But even yet his eyes cannot bear him, he outshines the sun and is 'dark with excess of light.' His voice as he says, 'Here is the passage up,' is of such compelling sweetness and love that Dante resolves never to rest until he is worthy to see the gentle Angel. Virgil points out that he gave his guidance before ever he was asked for it:

> This is a spirit divine, who in the way
> Of going up directs us without prayer,
> And with his own light himself conceals himself.
> He does with us as a man does with himself;
> For he who awaits the prayer, and sees the need,
> Malignly leans already towards refusal.'[3]

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[1] *Purg.* xvii. 34-39; *Æn.* xii. 593-613. For the comparison of Florence to Amata, see *Epis.* vii. 7; and for Lavinia as the noblest of the three wives of Æneas, *De Mon.* ii. 3.

[2] Not in the Aristotelian sense, however. In the *Poetics*, *katharsis* is a medical metaphor. As the body by medicine is relieved of unwholesome elements, so tragedy 'purifies' the mind by affording an outlet and discharge of the natural feelings of pity and fear.

[3] *Purg.* xvii. 55-60.

Plumptre thinks he sees in this 'some personal experience of disappointment, when Dante had hoped for help from one who saw his need, but waited to be asked and was then refused. It jarred on Dante's sensitiveness that he was compelled to solicit the cold hand of charity, and to solicit it in vain.' Doubtless this is true, but Dante is thinking chiefly of a characteristic of that Meekness which the Angel represents. Anger is not 'gentle and easy to be entreated,' it often hardens its heart against every appeal for help. On the other hand, as a passage in the *Convito* says, true liberality anticipates the asking; 'because when a thing is asked for, then the transaction is, on one side, not a matter of virtue but of commerce, inasmuch as he who receives buys, though he who gives sells not; wherefore Seneca saith "that nothing is bought more dear than that on which prayers are spent." Wherefore in order that there may be zealous liberality in the gift, and that it may be noted therein, it behoves that it be clear of every feature of merchandize; and so the gift must be unasked.' Hence it is that the Virgin Mary represents the prevenient grace of God which anticipates our prayers:

> 'Not only thy benignity gives succour
> To him who asketh it, but oftentimes
> Forerunneth of its own accord the asking.'[1]

The way in which the Angel conceals himself in his own light is in contrast to that in which the Angry conceal themselves in their own darkness. For Anger is a dark passion concealing its plans and purposes of revenge, whereas Meekness is a bright and sunny virtue harbouring nothing but an eagerness to help others, so vivid that it anticipates the need it sees. If it seems dark, it is partly because it conceals its help in humility, and partly because the eye, not yet wholly purified of angry passions, cannot bear its glowing, generous light.

The sun is now almost at the setting, and Virgil urges

[1] *Par.* xxxiii. 16-18; *Conv.* i. 8 (Wicksteed). Boccaccio in his *Life of Dante* tells how Guido Novello da Polenta of Ravenna, in order to save the poet the shame of asking hospitality offered it freely, 'requesting from Dante of special grace that which he knew Dante must needs have begged of him.'

haste lest the night fall, when, according to the law of the Mount, no man can climb. The evening hour, however, has a special appropriateness to this Terrace. Dante has timed himself so carefully that his departure is the fulfilment of the command, 'Be ye angry, and sin not: *let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*'[1] As soon as he had reached the first step of the stairway up, the third P was gently blown from his brow:

> Near me I felt as it were the movement of a wing,
> And fanning in the face, and saying, '*BEATI PACIFICI*, who are free from evil wrath.'[2]

The waft of the Angel's wing is soft and gentle as the evening breeze, cooling the brow, and blowing away the hot and angry passions of the day. The Beatitude of the Peacemakers cannot fall like evening dew, so long as any 'evil wrath' is harboured in the heart. For Dante knows that there is a wrath which is not evil, and that to be incapable of righteous indignation against sin is not a virtue but a vice. Probably the stern denunciations of the Papacy in this Terrace and throughout the poem are examples of this righteous anger. The waft of the Angel's wing, which blew away all passions of private personal revenge, could only fan into clearer flame the fire of righteous indignation which burnt in Dante's soul when he saw the wars and bloodshed produced by that very Church which ought to have been the chief guardian of the world's peace.

[1] Eph. iv. 26.

[2] *Purg.* xvii. 67-69.

CHAPTER XV

Terrace IV—'Accidia'

By the time the Pilgrims reached the Fourth Terrace the last rays of daylight were striking so far above them on the Mountain-top that the stars were beginning to appear on all sides. Already Dante's climbing power was giving way:

> 'O virtue mine, why dost thou thus dissolve?'
> Within myself I said; for I perceived
> The power of my legs was put in truce.[1]

This probably refers partly to the general law of Mount Purgatory by which climbing is impossible once the night falls; but we cannot be mistaken in seeing in it also an effect of the Terrace of Sloth, on which the poets have now arrived. It is Dante's way of confessing this sin—the slack, half-hearted, halting pursuit of the good: the obvious opposite of the swift and strenuous running of the souls on this Terrace, who refuse to halt for a moment to hold converse with him.

The night, however, is not spent in absolute slothfulness, for while action is suspended, thought and contemplation are thereby urged into greater activity, When Dante arrived on the two Terraces preceding. his first intimation of where he was came to him from voices in the air, and, remembering this, he now listens eagerly for some sound in the darkness from which he might infer the nature of this new sin. Absolute silence reigns; and in reply to his question, Virgil gives him the necessary information:

> 'The love of the good minished
> Of its duty, right here restores itself;
> Here is plied again the ill-belated oar.'[2]

This is not a description of Sloth in general, but of

[1] *Purg.* xvii. 73-75.

[2] *Purg.* xvii. 85-87.

Sloth in the pursuit of good. A certain love of the good is presupposed, but it is not strong enough to fulfil itself in duty, to embody itself in right action. It is the sin of 'the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,' a deeper degree of that inconstancy of will which set some of the redeemed in the lowest Heaven of the inconstant changing Moon.[1] The darkness of the night which has fallen on the Terrace is an essential part of the symbolism. Virgil compares the slothful soul to a rower who has trifled away the hours of daylight, and must now ply his oars more strenuously to make up for lost time, but without the sun as guide. To love the good without fulfilling it in duty is to create within the soul the night in which no man can work; and even repentance cannot in a moment call back the day that might have been. The souls on this Terrace, as we shall see, run in a very passion of eagerness to redeem the time, but it is in that moral darkness which must fall when, seeing the good and, in a certain sense, loving it, we yet cannot summon up fortitude and energy to carry it into life and action.

Virgil utilizes the enforced delay by delivering a series of ethical disquisitions, which constitute, in Dean Plumptre's words, 'the "meditation" of the "retreat."' The first consists of an exposition of the moral structure of the Purgatorio, the fundamental principle of the classification of its Seven Deadly Sins.[2] It corresponds to the discourse in the Eleventh Canto of the *Inferno* on the sins of the lost. Every sin of the Mount is traced to the universal root of Love, without which neither Creator nor creature can exist. Love is of two kinds: 'natural' or instinctive, which makes for its object without possibility of error; and spiritual or rational (*d'animo*), into which enter processes of reasoning, weighing, judging, choosing, and, with these, the possibility of going astray. This error may happen in one of three ways:

> 'Through an evil object,
> Or through too little, or through too much vigour.'

[1] *Par.* ii. 25 ff.

[2] *Purg.* xvii. 91-139.

These words indicate the threefold division into which the Seven Deadly Sins fall through the perversion, the defect, and the excess of Love. Love perverted aims at an evil object. The evil, Virgil declares, cannot be directed against a man's self, for, as St. Paul says, 'no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' Aquinas discusses the question whether it is possible for any one to hate himself, and replies that, properly speaking, it is not. It never happens except by accident, as when a man seeks an evil for himself believing it to be good, or mistakes his bodily and sensitive nature for his true self.[1] Even when a man commits suicide, it is in the belief, however mistaken, that the desperate deed is the best thing for him under the circumstances.

Just as little is it possible to hate God. This seems to contradict passages in the *Inferno* which represent sinners blaspheming, cursing, and defying God. The contradiction from Dante's view-point is only apparent. His meaning is that no one can hate God *as God*, as the Eternal Goodness,—hate rises only out of certain effects of God, such as His forbidding of evil pleasures, and the recoil of His laws upon the sinner. In this Dante is again following Aquinas, who distinguishes God in His essence and in His effects: 'God in His Essence is Goodness itself, which none can hate, because it is of the nature of good to be loved: and therefore it is impossible for any one seeing God in His Essence to hate Him . . . But some effects wrought by God are repugnant to an inordinate will, as the infliction of punishment, and also the prohibition of sins by the divine law; and in consideration of such effects God may be hated by some persons, inasmuch as He is the prohibitor of sins and the inflictor of punishments.'[2]

If, then, this love of evil is not directed against either self or God, it remains that it must be against our neighbour. It assumes the three forms punished on the three lowest Terraces—Pride, which, in the words of Aquinas, is 'love of one's own excellence, inasmuch

[1] *Summa*, i-ii. q. xxix. a. 4; Eph. v. 29. [2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxiv. a. 1.

as out of this love springs the inordinate desire of excelling others, which properly belongs to pride'; Envy, which is 'sadness at another's good,' because it threatens to eclipse ours; and Anger, which is a mortal sin when one desires an unjust vengeance, which is 'contrary to charity and justice.' Virgil's words are little more than a paraphrase of Aquinas:

> 'There is who by abasement of his neighbour
> Hopes to excel, and for this only longs
> That from his greatness he may be cast down.
> There is who power, grace, honour and fame
> Fears he may lose, because another rises;
> Whence he so saddens that he loves the contrary.
> And there is who through injury appears so shamed
> That for revenge he is made greedy,
> And such must needs seek out another's ill.'[1]

The remaining sins spring in various ways out of a confused conception of some good in which the mind may rest. Defective Love draws men towards the good, either in contemplation or in practice, but so slackly that their Sloth, after due repentance, must be paid for in suffering on this Fourth Terrace. The other three spring from an excess of Love—Avarice, Gluttony, Sensuality. The objects of these are not evil in themselves, but they constitute an inferior good which cannot create happiness. To pursue them beyond the bounds of reason, as if they were 'the good essence, of every good the fruit and root,' is to lavish love upon them inordinately, beyond their true intrinsic worth. Virgil leaves Dante to find out from experience on the Terraces above how the threefold sin branches out from the one same root of excessive Love. 'It is,' as Mr. Gardner says, 'practically a sermon on the Franciscan text, "Set Love in order, thou that lovest me."' Love in order, set to the right objects and in the right measure, is the root of every virtue; the selfsame Love in disorder is equally the root of every vice.[2]

[1] *Purg.* xvii. 115-123. For Pride, see *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxii.; Envy, ii-ii. q. xxxvi.; Anger, ii-ii. q. clviii.

[2] E. G. Gardner's *Dante*, p. 107. 'Love's tendency to good is the precious material upon which Free Will acts like the craftsman's hand, to fashion a satyr's mask or a crucifix' (p. 110).

This discourse created 'a new thirst' in Dante. What *is* this Love which is thus the source of good and evil alike? Virgil replies in effect that it is the capacity of desire, and exposes 'the error of the blind who make themselves guides'—the Epicureans, namely, who held that 'each love is in itself a laudable thing,' that every desire is good and to be gratified. A potential capacity of love is an original endowment of the soul. It is wakened to actuality by the faculty of apprehension which draws into us an image of some external thing. If this image kindles pleasure so that the soul bend toward it, 'that bending is Love,' and the sense of pleasure binds anew the original natural capacity. As fire by its own substance moves upward, so the 'spiritual motion' which we call desire never rests until it enjoy the thing beloved.

> 'Now may apparent be to thee how hidden
> The truth is from the people who aver
> Each love is in itself a laudable thing:
> Because its matter may perchance appear
> Aye to be good; but yet not every seal
> Is good, albeit good may be the wax.'[1]

The difficulty here is to understand what Dante means by the word 'matter.' It appears to be the ideal image which enters the mind by the faculty of apprehension, and to which the soul bends in joy and desire. This ideal image is the 'matter' on which the flame of desire feeds, and it always *appears* good. It may be only an appearance, like the objects of Pride, Envy, and Anger, which are really evil. Further, even when the 'matter,' the ideal image in the mind, is good, the seal which Love sets on the good wax may be an evil one. The reference is to defective and excessive Love: the former stamps the good wax with the seal of Sloth, the latter with that of Avarice, Gluttony, and Sensuality. The Epicurean doctrine, therefore, that every desire of pleasure is good cannot be substantiated: the good may be only apparent good, and even when it is real, the seal with which it is stamped may be the evil one of Love in defect or in excess.

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 34-39.

This exposition, while it satisfies Dante in regard to the nature of Love, only creates a new doubt:

> 'If Love from without is offered to us,
> And the soul goes not with another foot,
> If straight she go or crooked, it is not her merit.'[1]

In other words, Virgil in his discourse of Love seemed to have left no room for free-will. An image from the outside world enters the mind through the apprehensive faculty, and draws the soul to itself by an instinctive movement of pleasure and desire. If this is all—if 'the soul goes not with another foot'—she has no option. Whether she go right or wrong, there can be no question of merit or demerit: the whole movement is instinctive and necessary. In reply, Virgil disclaims the power of giving a complete solution of the problem,—it has a theological side which lies beyond his vision. His words show plainly that whatever more Virgil and Beatrice may stand for, they represent the scholastic distinction between Reason and Faith, human wisdom and divine:

> 'So far as Reason seeth here,
> Myself can tell thee; beyond that wait thou
> Only for Beatrice, for 'tis a work of Faith.'[2]

The solution which Reason gives is drawn substantially from Aquinas, and is well stated in Dean Plumptre's paraphrase: 'The soul is, in scholastic terminology, the "substantial form," *i.e.*, the essence, of man's nature. Without it the man is not.[3] As such, it has its own specific virtue, *i.e.*, its own ideas, tendencies, and capacities. These are known by their effects, as the nature of the plant is known by its leaves and flowers and fruits, as the instinct of the bee is seen in its making honey; but what is the source either of the primal conceptions or the primal desires, whether innate, inspired, or determined by stellar influences or a law of heredity, Dante will not say. The first desires, even if directed to counterfeits of good, are simply neutral,

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 43-45.
[2] *Purg.* xviii. 46-48.
[3] Aquinas, *Summa*, i. q. lxxvi. a. 4.

deserving neither praise nor blame; but with them there is innate in the soul (here Dante is not doubtful, for with him it was a primary fact of consciousness) a power that judges, warns, advises,—what we know as conscience. This stands as warder at the gate through which desire passes into act, brings with it the sense of merit or demerit, is the foundation of human liberty, and therefore of all systems of ethics which are worthy of the name, chiefly that of the "Master of those who know" (*Inf.* iv. 131; comp. *De Mon.* i. 12). Hence, even if we allow that every desire in men may be traced to a law of cause and effect, and admit so far the postulates of Determinism, there is yet a "noble virtue" in man, which theology, embodied in Beatrice, recognizes as keeping man from being bound hand and foot in the iron chain of necessity.' This doctrine of free-will is the keystone of Dante's entire moral and theological system, without which it would fall into ruins. When, in the Heaven of the Moon, Beatrice speaks of it, she makes no attempt whatever to solve the mystery, she simply emphasizes, in the strongest manner, the unspeakable value of free-will as the Creator's supreme gift:

> 'The greatest gift that in His largess God
> Creating made, and unto His own goodness
> Nearest conformed, and that which He doth prize
> Most highly, is the freedom of the will,
> Wherewith the creatures of intelligence,
> Both all and only, were and are endowed.'[1]

The hour was now approaching midnight. The very moon was moving slowly, as if she too felt the slothful power of the Terrace.[2] Dante himself began to succumb to the spirit of the place, standing, as he says, like a man who wanders half-asleep. It is questioned whether this is to be taken as a sign of sloth. It might, of course, be nothing more than the 'something of Adam'[3] in Dante which sent him to sleep the other two nights he spent on the Mountain, were it not that he himself

[1] *Par.* v. 19-24.

[2] *Purg.* xviii. 76-81. According to Butler, however, the hour was between 2 and 3 A.M.

[3] *Purg.* ix. 10.

connects his drowsiness in a very pointed way with the clear and satisfying nature of Virgil's reasoning:

> Whence I, who reason manifest and plain
> In answer to my questionings had gathered,
> Stood like a man who wanders half-asleep.[1]

It is that special form of Sloth to which the thinker and philosopher is exposed through the very activity of the brain. We are familiar with the fact that intellectual doubt paralyzes the active faculties; but we forget that intellectual certainty not seldom tends to much the same result. The philosopher, having spent his energy in thought, feels himself excused from becoming the man of action. In the present case, for example, free-will becomes a problem to be solved, rather than a faculty to be exercised; and the mind sinks to rest in the intellectual satisfaction of the answer. Dante compares this unreal relation between thought and action to the state of a man who wanders about half-asleep, his energies 'put in truce,' and all the outlines of active waking life blurred and dim. In plain words, the wisest, most rational moral philosophy which refuses to fulfil itself in conduct, merely ushers us into a drowsy and unreal world.

From this wandering in sleepy languor Dante is suddenly roused by a rush of loud active waking life. The penitents of the Terrace, like a troop of horses, 'ridden by good will and righteous love,' sweep on the poets from behind. Dante compares them significantly to the Theban votaries of Bacchus as they rushed along the banks of the Ismenus and Asopus in Bœotia, praying the god for rain upon their vineyards. Like so many of Dante's comparisons, the spiritual meaning lies beneath the surface. All this mad intoxication of zeal and energy and prayer was poured out by the heathen for nothing greater than rain for their crops—'merely that the Thebans had need of Bacchus.' But these penitents had need of God, and therefore their eager rush, which looked like wild Bacchanalian fury,

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 85-87.

justified itself by the greatness of the blessing which it pursued. It reminds us of St. Paul's contrast between the two forms of intoxication: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.'[1]

In front of the band ran two of the souls, probably the most eager in their penitence, crying out with tears the examples of zeal and alacrity which formed the 'whip' of their meditation. They are taken from the history of the two chosen peoples, Israel and Rome,—one from the humble life of Mary, a village maiden, the other from the great wars of the first Roman Emperor, who gave his name to all his successors:

> 'Mary ran with haste into the hill-country,'
> And 'Cæsar, in order to subdue Ilerda,
> Thrust at Marseilles, and then ran into Spain.'[2]

The reference in the last two lines is to Cæsar's defeat of Pompey's lieutenants, Afranius and Petreius, in Ilerda (now Lerida) in Catalonia in the year 49 B.C. Doubtless what excited Dante's admiration was Cæsar's refusal to be diverted from the central purpose of the campaign by a mere side issue: an admiration quickened by the vexation and anger with which he watched Henry VII. wasting his time at the siege of Cremona, when he should be striking at the root of rebellion in Florence. Improvising a navy, and detaching three of his legions, Cæsar left Marseilles blockaded by land and sea, seized the passes of the Pyrenees, and by a stratagem surrounded the Pompeian army and compelled it to lay down its arms.

In reply to the proclamation of these examples of alacrity by the two heralds in front, the main body behind urge themselves on in emulation of such zeal:

> 'Haste! Haste! that the time may not be lost
> Through little love,' forthwith the others cried,
> 'That study of good deeds may make grace bud again.'[3]

Dean Plumptre sees in this last line the scholastic

[1] Eph. v. 18. The reference to the invocation of Bacchus comes from Statius, *Thebaid*, ix. 434 ff.

[2] *Purg.* xviii. 100-102. Cæsar's rush to Spain is again referred to in *Par.* vi. 61-64.

[3] *Purg.* xviii. 103-105.

doctrine of 'grace of congruity,' condemned by the Church of England in Article XIII., viz., 'that the efforts of men to do good are effective in making them meet to receive grace for doing it.' The interpretation is somewhat doubtful. The idea seems rather to be the danger of contemplation of good deeds, without an eager and immediate effort to imitate them. Mere 'study' of them may end in the 'little love' which produces sloth. It is only when 'study' is accompanied by action that it 'makes grace bud again.' The running, indeed, has a special significance which is seldom noticed. Aquinas (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxv. a. 4) quotes Isidore to the effect that sadness, which the latter identifies with sloth, produces 'restlessness of body,' and this in turn is traced to 'wandering of mind.' These souls are restless yet, but for the opposite reason—that their minds do *not* wander. Their wills are set resolutely on one end, and they so run that they may obtain. This steadfast race, therefore, is the undoing of their old weary restless habit of running to and fro.

As the penitents rush past, Virgil begs them to tell him where is the nearest opening, as his companion, who is alive, wishes to ascend as soon as the sunlight returns. One of the souls answers breathlessly, 'Come behind us,' and apologizes for his seeming discourtesy in not stopping to talk; not even the marvellous news that Dante is alive can turn him aside. A lazy man is glad of any excuse to throw down his task and gossip with any passer by; and a busy man is often accused of discourteousness because he refuses to allow his work to be interfered with by mere talk. Aquinas names *verbositas*, talkativeness, as a sign of this sin, and traces it to the wandering of the mind about things forbidden, which is one of the 'daughters of Acedia.'[1] It is for

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxv. a. 4. In i-ii. q. xxxv. a. 8, Aquinas quotes a saying of Gregory of Nyssa: 'acedia est tristitia vocem amputans.' This effect of sadness upon the voice is discussed by the Bishop of Oxford in his Essay on Acedia afterwards referred to (pp. 236, 241). The shouting of the penitents on this Terrace shows that they have recovered from their voicelessness. The souls of the Sad in Hell can only gurgle their 'hymn' in their throats (*Inf.* vii. 117-126).

this reason that the conversation here is the shortest on any of the Terraces. Running on without pause until his voice is lost in the distance, this penitent soul tells who he is, and flings a warning word to the lord of Verona:

> 'I was Abbot in San Zeno at Verona,
> Under the empire of the good Barbarossa,
> Of whom still sorrowing Milan holds discourse.
> And such an one has already one foot in the grave,
> Who shall erelong lament that monastery,
> And sad will be to have had power there;
> Because his son, deformed in his whole body,
> And in mind worse, and who was basely born,
> He has put in place of its true pastor.'[1]

It is not certainly known who this Abbot is, though he is generally identified with Gherardo II. who ruled the monastery of San Zeno in the time of the Emperor Frederick I., and who died in 1187. Plumptre says that 'the few facts recorded of him, his restoration of the church and the erection of a new campanile, seem to speak of activity rather than sloth. From his studies of Veronese history,' he adds, 'Dante perhaps knew, while at the Court of Can Grande, more of his inner life, and wished to point the moral that there may be spiritual sluggishness in the midst of outward diligence.' The reference of the last lines of the quotation is to Alberto della Scala of Verona, who, at the ideal date of the poem, was an old man with 'one foot in the grave,'—in fact, he died the following year. The sin with which he is charged is nepotism. He appointed his son Giuseppo Abbot of San Zeno, a man with three serious disqualifications for holy orders—a deformed body, an imbecile mind, and the stain of illegitimacy.[2] For this sin, the Abbot prophesies, Alberto will soon be

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 118-126. 'The *good* Barbarossa' is probably not ironical, as some think. His energetic struggle against the temporal power of the Papacy would certainly free him in Dante's regard from the charge of sloth.

[2] For deformity, see Lev. xxi. 17-23, *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. xxxix. a. 6; illegitimacy, *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. xxxix. a. 5. There is some doubt as to whether the lack of reason is a bar to orders. Aquinas holds it is not, except in the case of the episcopate, to which the cure of souls is attached (*Suppl.* q. xxxix. a. 2).

weeping, either in Purgatory or, more probably, in Hell. For some reason difficult to understand, Dante is far from sorry to hear this news:

> This I heard, and to retain it pleased me.

When we remember that Alberto was the father of Dante's great hero and patron Can Grande, we can scarcely help thinking that silence might have been more gracious and becoming.[1] Possibly some personal insult inflicted on him by the base-born Abbot made the poet bitter; but this need not blind us to the fact that scarcely anything roused a more terrible indignation in Dante than the spiritual ruin inflicted on the Church by such abuses.

The whole troop has now swept past, the rear being brought up by two laggards who proclaim aloud examples of the ruinous power of Sloth or Accidia, to use Dante's word, which form the bit and 'bridle' of this sin. The words in which Virgil describes their action are translated by some 'biting at sloth,' by others, 'putting a bit on sloth,'—the ambiguity lurking in the word, *morso*, which means both 'biting' and 'a bit.'[2] It is perhaps impossible from the mere phrase itself to justify the suggestion that these spirits were biting at the bit; but that probably represents their actual moral attitude. Dante had compared the whole band to a troop of horses, 'ridden by good will and righteous love.' If we carry out the figure, these two laggard souls behind the rest are like two restive horses biting at their bits and not yet perfectly subdued to their rider's will. They do indeed call out the examples of Sloth which form the bridle of the vice, but, even in the act of calling, they rebel somewhat against the unwelcome restraint. The experience is familiar enough to all of us.

As usual, the examples of Accidia are drawn from sacred and profane story; or rather, to state it from Dante's point of view, from the history of the two chosen peoples. Accidia, as we shall see, is a very

[1] *Par.* xvii. 70-81. [2] *Purg.* xviii. 132: 'dando all' accidia di morso.'

complex sin; and the special aspect of it which is here singled out is that cowardly shrinking and failure of the soul in the presence of high and arduous enterprises, by which men prove themselves unworthy of the great destinies to which the grace of Heaven has called them. Dante sets before us here, as the Bishop of Oxford says in his well-known essay on this sin, 'instances in which a great vocation was dismally forfeited through faint-heartedness, through lack of faith and courage. For accidie was a part, at least, of their sin who "would not go up" to win "that pleasant land," but "murmured in their tents"; to whom God sware "that they should not enter into His rest," "because of unbelief"; and of their sin, too, who forewent the glory of "a share in founding the great Roman Empire," the degenerate, slothful band, who stayed behind in Sicily—

"Who dared not hazard life for future fame."'[1]

It is a temptation with which Dante himself was well acquainted. At the very outset of his great pilgrimage, he tells us that his heart and flesh fainted and failed: he was not worthy of the high quest of salvation. Had it not been for Virgil's taunt,

'Thy soul attainted is with cowardice,'

he would have folded up his pound in a napkin and basely laid it past. At root, the sin is that of undervaluing and despising the gifts wherewith God has endowed us, and the work for which they are bestowed.[2]

It becomes necessary, now that we have the completed narrative before us, to examine more carefully the nature of this sin, if for no other reason than that the word Sloth does not convey to our modern minds anything like the full mediæval conception of it. Perhaps the simplest way is to begin by examining the various forms of the mediæval name for Sloth. The form used by Aquinas is *Acedia*, the transliteration of the Greek ἀκηδία—the state, as the word means, of not caring for anything. It is undoubtedly this feeling of

[1] *The Spirit of Discipline*, pp. 18, 19. [2] *Inf.* ii. 45; *De Mon.* i. 1.

don't care which is the root idea of the sin: it may have many causes, and may assume many forms, but fundamentally it is the break-down of interest in the things which are worthy of a man's endeavour. The form used by Dante is *Accidia*. The word occurs only once—in the present passage, Canto xviii. 132—and the adjective *accidioso* in *Inf.* vii. 123. Readers of Chaucer are familiar with the sin under the form of *Accidie* in *The Parson's Tale*. 'Its Greek origin being forgotten,' says the *New English Dictionary*, 'the word was variously "derived" from *acidum* sour . . . and from *accidere* to come upon one as an *accident* or *access*, whence the med. Lat. corruption, *accidia*, and O. Fr. and Eng. *acci-de*, *acci-die* . . . With the restoration of Greek learning, the Latin became again *acedia*.' Whatever errors of etymology may have altered the form of the word, the mediæval conception of the sin remained fundamentally unchanged,—the state of *don't care*, a torpor and indifference to good, a dull melancholy paralysis of healthy interest in life and work, in God and man.

It is to be carefully noted that Dante has set Accidia as the central evil of the Seven Deadly Sins. One reason is that Sloth, being a sin of both flesh and spirit, has ethical relations to the three Terraces beneath with their lusts of the spirit, and to the three above with their lusts of the flesh. A second reason is involved in Virgil's doctrine of Love. The sins of the spirit, Pride, Envy, Anger, spring from perverted Love—Love directed to some positive evil object. Dante has now overcome this positive perversion of Love to evil, and has turned Love in the direction of good. But the turning is very feeble at first, the Love of good is there, indeed, but weak, slothful, half-indifferent. The work of this central Terrace is to fan 'the smoking flax' into a bright flame of righteous Love which will burn out the remaining sins, the lusts of the flesh on the Terraces above. This conquest of the flesh is utterly impossible if the soul is sunk in a 'Slough of Despond,' an unexpectant melancholy, a spiritual indifference

and acquiescence in its own low moral state. The inner life must be strung up to the key of hope and expectancy, of the infinite value of the human soul, of its being unspeakably worth while to strain every nerve after goodness, and of a joyous anticipation of final deliverance. All this is the exact opposite of Dante's *Accidia*, and without it he felt he could not face the remaining Terraces. When love of the Highest Good grows into a strong controlling interest and power, it cannot but keep in their due bounds the three great lusts of the flesh, which, according to Dante's ethical scheme, are simply the love of lower goods in disorder and excess.

Turning now to the range and contents of this sin, we find considerable doubt and controversy. The dispute is to some extent a verbal one, and has its source in the very subtlety and complexity of the sin, and the degrees in which men yield to it. So far as Dante is concerned, the difficulty springs from his description of the souls at the bottom of the Stygian Lagoon in the Inferno:

> Fixed in the slime they say: 'Sad were we
> In the sweet air which by the sun is gladdened,
> Bearing within ourselves the slothful smoke:
> Now are we sad in the black mire.'[1]

'The slothful smoke' is 'accidioso fummo'; and the question is whether the word *accidioso* justifies us in identifying the sin thus described with the *Accidia* of this Fourth Terrace of Purgatory. Dr. Moore argues strenuously against this identification, maintaining that the sad souls in the Stygian mire 'represent a type or species of anger, viz. sullen, suppressed, or sulky anger; a gloomy, resentful, discontented disposition, refusing to rejoice in the bright sunshine, and other occasions of happiness and contentment in this upper world.' One can accept this without endorsing his contention that this sullen anger is incompatible with 'the more technically restricted term *accidia*.'[2] *Is* it more technically restricted? Is not this 'sullen,

[1] *Inf.* vii. 121-124.

[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 175.

suppressed, or sulky anger,' this 'gloomy, resentful, discontented disposition,' just this sin of *accidia* when it has deepened into its final form of hopeless and incurable bitterness? On this Terrace it has not reached this desperate finality for which nothing is left but 'the black mire.' The Bishop of Oxford is certainly not wrong when he says that the three main elements of the sin are '*gloom* and *sloth* and *irritation*,' which can indeed be distinguished in thought, but meet and mingle in experience.[1] They are all found in Aquinas: 'Sloth is a heaviness and sadness, that so weighs down the soul that it has no mind to do anything. It carries with it a disgust of work. It is a torpor of the mind neglecting to set about good. Such sadness is always evil.' Out of this sadness comes 'rancour,' according to Gregory, as one of 'the daughters of acedia,' and one of the effects of rancour is bitterness, acrimoniousness (*amaritudo*).[2] There can be no doubt that all three elements were recognized as constituent parts of this sin. Chaucer, for example, says in his *Parson's Tale*: 'After the synne of envye and of ire, now wol I speken of the synne of accidie; for envye blyndeth the herte of man, and ire troubleth a man, and accidie maketh hym hevy, thoghtful and wrawful. Envye and ire maken bitternesse in herte, which bitternesse is mooder of accidie and bynymeth (taketh away from) hym the love of alle goodnesse. Thanne is accidie the angwissh of troubled herte; and Seint Augustyn seith, it is anoy of goodnesse and joye of harm. Certes this is a dampnable synne, for it dooth wrong to Jhesu Crist, in as muche as it bynymeth the service that men oghte doon to Crist with alle diligence, as seith Salomon. But accidie dooth no swich diligence. He dooth alle thyng with anoy, and with wrawnesse, slaknesse, and excusacioun, and with ydelnesse, and unlust; for which the book seith, "Accursed be he that dooth the service of God necligently."' This passage shows the close connection that exists between anger and accidie. 'Wrawnesse' is just that sullen

[1] *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 54. [2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxv. a. 1, 4.

species of anger, half peevish, half morose, and wholly bitter, which Dante sets in the black slime of Styx. It is absent from this Terrace, not, as Dr. Moore thinks, because Accidia has some 'technical sense in which it is ranked as one of the Seven Deadly Sins,' but because when it reaches this depth of bitter and angry resentment against the very sunshine, it is past redemption. It is not a matter of 'technical sense' at all, but of moral degree. Dante cared little for mere technicalities of rigid ethical systems, and knew as well as Aquinas and Chaucer how sins run into one another.

The complete disappearance of the word 'accidie' from our modern speech has led to the idea that the sin represented by it is a spiritual disease of the cloister, which cannot exist outside its walls. There can be no doubt that its occurrence in monasteries was so common, and its form so marked and virulent, that there is some justification for this view. Dante adopts it so far, at least, as to choose the Abbot of a monastery as his one typical example of the sin; and when Spenser describes the chariot of Pryde Duessa, the portrait of Idlenesse, the rider of the first of the six beasts by which it is drawn, is avowedly that of a monk:

> The first, that all the rest did guyde,
> Was sluggish Idlenesse, the nourse of sin;
> Upon a slouthfull Asse he chose to ryde,
> Arayd in habit blacke, and amis thin,
> Like to an holy Monck, the service to begin.
>
> And in his hand his Portesse still he bare,
> That much was worne, but therein little redd;
> For of devotion he had little care,
> Still drownd in sleepe, and most of his daies dedd:
> Scarse could he once uphold his heavie hedd,
> To looken whether it were night or day.
> May seeme the wayne was very evill ledd,
> When such an one had guiding of the way,
> That knew not whether right he went, or else astray.
>
> From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,
> And greatly shunned manly exercise;
> From everie work he chalenged essoyne,
> For contemplation sake.[1]

[1] *Faerie Queene*, Bk. I. Canto iv. stanzas 18-20. The whole of Spenser's

The last three words show us the source of this particular quality of Sloth. Men give themselves to 'a one-sidedly contemplative life, without having the power or calling for it.' In the case of mere lazy vagabonds who enter the cloister for

> the good bellyful,
> The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
> And day-long blessed idleness beside,[1]

contemplation is, as in Spenser's picture, pure excuse for shunning work. Dante is thinking of a somewhat higher type—men who have a genuine love of goodness, but so feeble that it sinks into a melancholy indifference even to holy things under the strain of a life of contemplation, to which neither God nor their own nature ever called them. There is no cure for this but work, and work which preserves the proper balance between the outer and the inner life, action and contemplation. 'Akedia,' writes Bishop Martensen, 'must —apart from dietetic means, which in many cases are to be applied—be fought, above all things, by regular work, in which the individual can forget himself, as also by living together with men, by intercourse with nature, in which last respect Goethe so aptly says that the pleasure we find in life depends on the regular return to external things, on the alternation of day and night, the change of the seasons, of blossom and fruit; that the equipoise in our own existence depends on our living together with this quiet regularity of nature, on our surrender to it.'[2]

At the same time, no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that the disappearance of the word from our vocabulary means the disappearance of the sin from our lives. 'It would be incautious,' writes Bishop Paget, 'and profoundly and perilously untrue, if any one were to think that the temptation and the sin belong to a bygone age, or need not be thought about or fought against in the present day, even under

description of the Procession of the Deadly Sins in this Canto should be carefully studied and compared with this division of the *Purgatorio*.

[1] Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*.

[2] *Christian Ethics* (Individual), p. 378.

such circumstances as may seem to have least of the cloister or of asceticism in them. It may have changed its habit, covered its tonsure, and picked up a new language; but it is the same old sin which centuries ago was wrecking lives that had been dedicated to solitude and to austerity, to prayer and praise.' The plain fact of experience is that it is frequently produced by action, as surely as by contemplation. The warm young impulses of the soul, when they attempt to embody themselves in deeds, get chilled and discouraged by contact with the hard facts of life: faith withers in the breath of the world's unbelief; hope faints when it sees how little can be accomplished; and love shrinks back within itself, perhaps even dies under the wounds inflicted on it by ingratitude and abuse. A paralyzing sense of the uselessness of doing anything creeps over the heart, a great weariness in well-doing, a hopelessness about one's self, as if the very heart-strings were unstrung or even cut. 'And so there settles down upon the soul a dire form of accidie; the dull refusal of the highest aspiration in the moral life; the acceptance of a view of one's self and of one's powers which once would have appeared intolerably poor, unworthy, and faint-hearted; an acquiescence in discouragement, which reaches the utmost depth of sadness when it ceases to be regretful; a despondency concerning that goodness to which the love of God has called men, and for which His grace can make them strong.'[1] This is Accidie in its nobler form. Far lower is the form it assumes when it is the weary reaction upon itself of a heart over-driven and jaded with an unceasing round of the world and its excitements. For, to quote Martensen once more, 'while weariness and disgust of life mainly spring from an unfruitfully contemplative tendency, and a leisurely occupation with the one thing, yet it may also proceed from the contrary, and that in the form of becoming *blasé*, of spiritual withering, namely, from living and moving exclusively in multiplicity, in an excess of enjoyments, as is the case with

[1] *The Spirit of Discipline*, pp. 33, 46.

many people of the world, to whom religion alone, that is, the return to the One, would bring healing.'[1] The direct and intentional contrast to every form of this sin is Matelda on the Mountain-top, the fair and radiant symbol of the Active Life, to whom work is as the gathering of flowers, and contemplation of God's handiwork a joy that breaks into music on the lips.[2]

This chapter is too long already, but there is one point which must be noticed before closing. It is strange to find a total absence of prayer on this Terrace. No soul either prays for himself or asks the prayers of others. The omission is certainly not accidental; but it is extremely difficult to account for it. Are the penitents supposed to be praying in the silence and secret of the heart? Or are we to apply to them the saying 'laborare est orare,' as Dr. Moore suggests, regarding their eager running as both work and prayer?[3] Or, finally, are we to regard their prayerlessness as in some sort part of their punishment for some former abuse of prayer? I believe it is in this last direction we are to look for the answer. Prayer is perhaps the highest exercise of the human soul and requires the greatest spiritual energy.[4] When a man gives way to accidie, it is one of the first things that suffer, and that in two ways: either it is dropped, or, if it cannot be dropped, it is degraded to a cant. The latter is, perhaps, what Dante was chiefly thinking of. His choice of an Abbot as the typical penitent shows that he had before his mind men who professed to devote their lives to prayer. When they gave way to sloth, prayer in any real sense became too heavy a burden for their spiritual energy. Their profession of religion might compel them to continue the form of it, but it could be nothing but a form, and would rapidly sink into a cant. It is the danger of

[1] *Christian Ethics* (Individual), p. 379.

[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 37 ff. See p. 376 ff.

[3] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 262.

[4] 'Prayer is not a substitute for work; it is a desperate effort to work further and to be efficient beyond the range of one's powers. It is not the lazy who are most inclined to prayer; those pray most who care most, and who, having worked hard, find it intolerable to be defeated' (*The Life of Reason: Reason in Religion*, by George Santayana, p. 40).

every man whose profession compels him to handle sacred things as his daily business: his soul tends to become

> Praying-machine, until the day's chief sin
> Is the chief duty he has done therein.[1]

The penalty is sure: prayer loses all spiritual reality for the man himself, and the power of true prayer withers away. No form of prayer is given to these souls, for the simple reason that they have lost for a time the power to use it, and its total absence is a greater reverence to God than to continue to repeat, as of old, an empty form. It is probably for the same reason that they ask no prayer from others, as do the souls on the rest of the Terraces. It was part of their own duty on earth to pray for the souls of the dead,—a duty so lazily and negligently performed that it ceased to have any spiritual reality even to themselves, and they lost faith in their own vain repetitions. This loss of faith still clings to them—they cannot now ask others to pray for them, remembering the unreality of their own prayers for the dead. This would give a very significant and impressive meaning to the absence of prayer from this Terrace, and one which need not be confined to monks. The loss of the power of prayer, of the sense of its reality and worth, is the natural penalty of an habitual yielding to spiritual Accidie, in the wide meaning of that almost forgotten word.

[1] *Raban*, by W. C. Smith, p. 119.

CHAPTER XVI

Dante's Second Dream: The Siren

It was now the hour before the dawn on the Tuesday morning. The troop of penitents of Sloth swept on out of sight, and Dante fell into a dream—his second since he arrived upon the Mount. His description of how he drifted into it shows that it was something more than the result of mere natural weariness:

> A new thought did set itself within me,
> Whence others many and diverse were born;
> And so from one unto another I doted on
> That mine eyes for very wandering I closed,
> And the musing into dream transmuted.[1]

The nature of the dream proves that this is that 'wandering of the mind around forbidden things,' which Gregory names as one of the six 'daughters of Sloth,' and which Aquinas traces out in various directions and forms. The dream in its beginning is an evil one; and since Dante expressly says it is the transmutation of his musing into a new form, it is obvious that this wandering of the mind is born of accidie. He means to tell us that instead of keeping vigil against this sin, he slothfully allowed his mind to wander round forbidden things, and these forbidden things, as we shall see from the dream, are the sins on the three remaining Terraces.

The dream is a morning one, coming near the dawn,

> 'when dreams
> Begin to feel the truth and stir of day.'

It will, therefore, according to Dante's belief, be fulfilled.

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 141-145.

His astronomical description of the hour is meant to suggest something more, perhaps, than a symbolic connection of the stars with his moral state. In the first place, it is the coldest hour of the twenty-four, that in which human vitality is at its lowest ebb. The heat of the day, 'conquered by Earth, or at times by Saturn,' can no longer warm the coldness of the Moon,—all three being regarded as naturally frigid.[1] It is, therefore, the hour of all others when Sloth finds us its easiest prey.

The second note of time is much more difficult to understand. It is the hour

> When geomants their Greater Fortune
> See in the orient, before the dawn,
> Rise by a way that short time stays dark for it.[2]

Geomancy pretended to predict future events by means of figures indicated by certain points, taken at random on the earth's surface. The common explanation of the passage before us is that the particular figure known as Fortuna Major was taken from the last stars of Aquarius and the first of Pisces, which at that hour were on the eastern horizon. There is no reason for questioning this, yet the feeling remains that Dante had some deeper meaning in his mind. The mention of Saturn is at least suggestive. For 'Saturn is the Greater Infortune of the old system of astrology, and is by universal experience acknowledged to be the most potent, evil, and malignant of all the planets.'[3] Is it not possible that Dante meant to say that at this moment good and evil stars were contending for the dominion of his soul: the propitious Greater Fortune was, to use the astrological phrase, 'evil aspected' by the adverse and saturnine Greater Infortune, and the

[1] 'It was a popular belief that, when the planet Saturn was on the horizon, greater cold was felt on earth. This idea originated in the fact that the planet in question was the one farthest off from the sun' (Vernon's *Readings*, ii. 108 n.)—as it was then believed to be. For its coldness, see *Conv.* ii. 14, *Canz.* xv. 7.

[2] *Purg.* xix. 4-6. Chaucer refers to 'Fortuna maior' in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III. l. 1420.

[3] R. A. Proctor's *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy*, p. 29.

two powers contended for him, as did the Siren and the 'holy lady' of his dream? He certainly had some kind of belief in the influence of the heavens; and he may well have wished to indicate that this was a critical moment when his moral life hung in the balance, the stars in their courses fighting both for him and against.

The dream is the transmutation of this conjunction of the stars into its symbolic moral equivalent:

> There came to me in dream a stammering woman,
> Squint in her eyes, and in her feet distorted,
> With hands lopped off, and of a pallid hue.
> I gazed on her; and, as the Sun doth strengthen
> The cold limbs which the night weighs down,
> Even so my look did render voluble
> Her tongue, and after set her all erect
> In a brief time, and the lost countenance,
> As love doth will, even so in her did colour.
> After that she had her speech thus loosed,
> She began to sing so, that with pain
> Would I have turned my mind away from her.
> 'I am,' she sang, 'I am the Siren sweet,
> Who the mariners in mid-sea enchant,
> So full am I of pleasantness to hear.
> I turned Ulysses from his wandering way
> Unto my song, and whoso with me is used
> Rarely departs, so wholly I content him.'[1]

The general meaning is quite plain. The conscience when first confronted with certain sins recoils from them instinctively, as things hideous and loathsome. But all this is changed by mere gazing at them. Familiarize the mind with them, and not merely does the first natural shrinking depart, but the imagination begins to invest them with beauty and charm. 'Pope,' as Plumptre says, 'unconsciously reproduced Dante when he wrote—

> "Vice is a monster of such hideous mien
> As to be hated needs but to be seen.
> Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."'[2]

It is a much more difficult thing to say what exactly the deformed woman represents. Ruskin is the most

[1] *Purg.* xix. 7-24.

[2] *Essay on Man*, ii. 217-220.

interesting representative of the view which regards her as the symbol of the Terrace of Avarice immediately above, and not of the three sins of the flesh which Dante has yet to conquer. He contrasts her with Plutus, 'the Great Enemy' who guards the Misers and Prodigals in the Fourth Circle of Hell. 'The great enemy is obeyed knowingly and willingly; but the spirit—feminine—and called a Siren—is the "*Deceitfulness* of riches," *ἀπάτη πλούτου* of the Gospels, winning obedience by guile. This is the Idol of riches, made doubly phantasmal by Dante's seeing her in a dream. She is lovely to look upon, and enchants by her sweet singing, but her womb is loathsome.' He proceeds to identify her with Spenser's Philotimé, and draws an interesting meaning from her reference to Ulysses. 'Note further, that she says it was her song that deceived Ulysses. Look back to Dante's account of Ulysses' death, and we find it was not the love of money, but pride of knowledge, that betrayed him;[1] whence we get the clue to Dante's complete meaning: that the souls whose love of wealth is pardonable have been first deceived into pursuit of it by a dream of its higher uses, or by ambition. His Siren is therefore the Philotimé of Spenser, daughter of Mammon—

> "Whom all that folk with such contention
> Do flock about, my deare, my daughter is—
> Honour and dignity from her alone
> Derived are."'[2]

This last piece of interpretation, however interesting, can scarcely justify itself. If the 'wandering way' of Ulysses is the pride of knowledge which led him ultimately to his death, obviously the Siren of Wealth who drew him from it represents rather the temptation to abandon the pursuit of knowledge for the phantasm of material goods.[3]

[1] *Inf.* xxvi. 85 ff.

[2] *Munera Pulveris*, iii. 90; *Faerie Queene*, Bk. II. Canto vii. 48.

[3] Ruskin, however, is not wrong in connecting the temptation with knowledge. In the Odyssey the Sirens offer Ulysses not only knowledge of the past, but also of 'all that shall be hereafter on the fruitful earth.' If we accept the view advocated above, that the Siren represents the three sins, Avarice, Gluttony, Sensuality, the meaning may be that

In short, the interpretation is too narrow. Virgil's words later on show that the Siren stands for the complete round of fleshly sin on the three remaining Terraces—Avarice, Gluttony, Sensuality. Dante on waking is bowed down with misgiving by the memory of the dream, and Virgil says to him:

> 'Sawest thou that ancient witch,
> Who alone above us henceforth is bewept?'[1]

This is very misleading if it does not mean all three of the upper Terraces, and we need have little hesitation in accepting the interpretation generally adopted. The Siren represents that Excessive Love to which Virgil has already traced the three sins of the flesh—that inordinate desire after lower natural goods, which proves to be a mere phantasm of happiness, and, by its very excess, ends in a positive disgust and loathing, which wakes us from the dream. Her physical deformities and defects represent the way in which these sins destroy the various faculties of both soul and body. 'Benvenuto says,' writes Vernon, 'that *the stammering tongue* means Avarice, which never speaks openly and clearly but deceitfully; it means Gluttony because drunkenness makes a man speak thick, and Sensuality because it makes him a liar and a flatterer. *The squinting eye* denotes Avarice, because the miser is blind from the craving of acquisitiveness and of hoarding; it denotes both Gluttony and Sensuality, because over indulgence destroys the eyes both bodily and mentally. *She is lame* because in those three sins man never walks in the right paths. *She is maimed* because the Miser never uses his hands to give, and the Gluttonous and the Sensual never work, but are idle and slothful. All three, the Miser, the Glutton, and the Voluptuary, have pallid faces'[2]—the pallor representing the absence of love, since we find that afterwards she changed colour 'as love willed.'

Ulysses was tempted by that false and evil knowledge of life and the world which these vices promise. Comp. Eccles. ii. 3.

[1] *Purg.* xix. 58, 59. Comp. xvii. 136, 137.

[2] *Readings on the Purgatorio*, ii. 111.

Mr. Butler prefers to identify the Siren with the sin of the Terrace, Sloth, and notes in proof that she who discomfits her is 'a lady holy and *alert*.' There is no real contradiction between this interpretation and that given above. As Mr. Butler himself says, 'idleness is at once the cause and the effect of fleshly sins.' It is, in Spenser's phrase, 'the nourse of sin,' and the converse is equally true. The threefold sin of Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust destroys the active powers, and with its Siren songs lulls the soul into a dream of slothful ease.

Scarce had the Siren ceased singing when there appeared beside Dante the 'lady holy and alert' just mentioned, crying fiercely, 'O Virgil, O Virgil, who is this?' Whereupon Virgil, in his character of Reason, taking care to keep his eyes fixed on the holy lady, seized the other, says Dante,

> and opened her in front
> Rending her garments, and showed me her belly;
> This waked me with the stench that issued from it.[1]

This is obviously imitated from the passage in the *Consolation of Philosophy* in which the majestic form of Philosophy appeared to Boethius to rebuke the Muses who were helping to unman him: 'When she saw that the Muses of poetry were present by my couch giving words to my lamenting, she was stirred awhile; her eyes flashed fiercely, and said she, "Who has suffered these seducing mummers to approach this sick man? . . . Away with you, Sirens, seductive unto destruction! leave him to my Muses to be cared for and to be healed."'[2] The general meaning of this part of the dream is clear. The 'lady holy and alert' represents some form of Divine grace rousing the reason which had fallen under the spell of the Siren. As it was gazing at the deformed woman which had made her beautiful, so now it is gazing at the 'honest one' which breaks the spell, and reveals the secret foulness within. Beyond this we cannot go with certainty. The lady

[1] *Purg.* xix. 25-33. Comp. Ezek. xvi. 37, xxiii. 29.

[2] Book I. Prose i. (Dent's Temple Classics). The Sirens are sometimes represented as daughters of the Muses.

can scarcely be, as many of the older commentators thought, the Reason, since this is already represented by Virgil. The Virgin Mary, Santa Lucia, the Church, the Wisdom of Proverbs viii., Philosophy, Temperance, are among the other conjectures. There are passages further on which tempt one to connect her with Beatrice. When Dante meets her on the Mountain-top, she says she called him back, '*in dream* and otherwise' from 'following false images of good'; and she commands him to listen to her so that 'another time, *hearing the Sirens*, he may be more strong.'[1] This certainly sounds like a reference to this Siren-dream. But perhaps the temptation to identify her with Matelda is even greater. As symbol of the Active Life, it would be natural that she should rebuke this Siren of Sloth and the sins she leads to. In his picture of her in the Earthly Paradise, Dante seems to contrast her, point by point, with the deformed faculties and members of the other. Her tongue is singing *Delectasti*. Venus herself could not outshine the light of her 'honest eyes.' He remembers her feet and the dainty movement of them, as of a lady in the dance. Her hands were plucking flowers; and her colour was that of 'one who warms herself in rays of love.' One by one the stammering tongue and eyes asquint, the distorted feet and maimed hands and pallid colour are reversed, as if intentionally. And finally, it is surely strong corroboration of this view that the very word 'alert' (*presta*), which Butler thinks so significant, is expressly applied to Matelda. We should, perhaps, be satisfied with the general truth that there come critical moments when Divine grace has to rouse even the highest human reason to its danger; but if we are to go beyond this, and identify the 'lady holy and alert' with some one, Matelda seems to have as good a claim as any other.[2]

We come now to the awakening of Dante; and the special point is that it was *not* accomplished by Reason

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 134, 135; xxxi. 45.
[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 40 ff. The word *presta* is used in l. 83.

alone. It was evidently only in the dream that Virgil seemed negligent; in the real and waking world, Dante still finds him 'the good Master,'—in other words, though bewitched for a moment by the Siren, his reason remains uncorrupted by her foulness. Like the Preacher, his wisdom remained with him.[1] Nevertheless, mere Reason had been powerless to rouse him from his sinful dream. Virgil tells him he had given him at least three calls in vain. It was not his 'three voices' that wakened him at last, but the actual revelation of the hidden corruption of sins of the flesh. The allegory means that the repeated expostulations of a man's own reason are often powerless to rouse him from the delusions of sin, and nothing is then left but that he be *shocked* into the truth by the bitter experience of discovering for himself all the loathsome foulness which festers under the fair garment of the flesh. This terrible disenchantment is not due to the voice of Reason alone, but to Reason roused and quickened by heavenly grace to rend the veil that hides the hideous truth. We may compare with this Spenser's merciless picture of the stripping naked of Duessa, or Falsehood, and the frightful revelation of her secret deformities and foulnesses, by which the final deliverance of the Redcrosse Knight was accomplished.[2] The language of both poets may shock our modern delicacy, which prefers to keep its Siren veiled, but a single line of Spenser's is their sufficient defence:

'Entire affection hateth nicer hands.'

When Dante awoke, he found '*all* the circles of the sacred Mount filled with the high day'; by which he means that the Sloth of the Terrace had made him lose a little of the early morning light, for if he had wakened at dawn, the sunlight would have reached only the upper Terraces, and all the lower would still have lain in shadow—just as when, the evening before,

[1] Eccles. ii. 9.

[2] *Faerie Queene*, Bk. I. Canto viii. 46-50. Canto vii. 16 of this Book shows, however, that Duessa is the Falsehood of the Papacy, which the giant Orgoglio or Pride has crowned with a 'triple crowne.' See *Stones of Venice*, iii. Appendix 2.

as he climbed to this Cornice, he notes that the last sunbeams struck only on the Mountain above him.[1] Without further loss of time the poets start upon their journey, 'going with the new sun at their backs,' —'the position,' as Butler notes, 'which a man who wishes to see the work that lies before him would naturally assume.' Nevertheless, Dante's attitude is far from that of a man who is taking the work before him resolutely in hand. He follows Virgil, bent under a load of thought into the shape of 'the half arch of a bridge.'[2] And then, suddenly, his dispirited mood is broken in upon by the voice of the Angel of Alacrity or Zeal, who guards the stairway to the next Terrace, 'Come, here is the passage.' The voice was 'gentle and kind,' says Dante, beyond any ever heard in 'this mortal march.' On earth, that is, men of zeal and energy find it hard to combine these qualities with a gentle and kindly temper and manner: their very voices are apt to sharpen to an angry edge of impatience towards those less energetic than themselves. What Dante wants us to understand is that even his bent dispirited attitude, so different from the Angel's own zealous upward-pointing wings, cannot ruffle the gentleness of the angelic temper, for perfect zeal is perfect kindliness. Of the Angel himself Dante evidently sees nothing save the swan-like wings, wide-spread for flight, in symbol of eager, energetic service, and white in token of the purity of his zeal,—all self passing out of sight and lost in the perfect singleness of heart of his obedience. With those strong wings of zeal, he gently fanned the P of Sloth from Dante's brow,

> Affirming *qui lugent* to be blessed,
> For they shall have their souls ladies of consolation.[3]

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[1] The evening, as we saw, is the natural time to part with anger: 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' Similarly, the morning is the natural time for the active life of this Terrace: 'The sun ariseth . . . Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening' (Ps. civ. 22, 23).

[2] Boccaccio represents this as Dante's habitual attitude.

[3] *Purg.* xix. 50, 51. Butler, in order evidently to bring out the sense,

The *qui lugent* refers, of course, to the Vulgate of the Beatitude, 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.'[1] At first glance, this Beatitude seems to have almost no moral appropriateness to this Terrace; but on looking closer the connection is found to be peculiarly deep and intimate. Sloth, we have seen, involves a profound element of *sadness*,—'sadness,' as Aquinas says, 'at spiritual good, inasmuch as it is divine good.'[2] It is that low-spirited state of soul which shrinks away sorrowfully from the pain and exertion which the struggle to attain spiritual good involves. And the Beatitude is,—Blessed are they that mourn over this sadness which makes divine good seem not worthy of the effort to gain it. We shall miss much of the meaning if we fail to see that it is just this blessed sorrow which was bending Dante himself into 'the half arch of a bridge,' as his conversation with Virgil, when they have passed the Angel, proves. Virgil asks what ails him that he gazes only at the ground; and Dante replies that the strange vision he has had is bending him to itself and filling him with a misgiving of fear—fear, evidently, that he will never be strong enough to cast off the power of the Siren, to break the spell of fleshly sin. It is just as he comes forward bending languidly under the load of this misgiving that the Angel meets him with the declaration that such sorrow is blessed, because it carries in its bosom treasures of consolation. What those treasures are, Dante discovers almost immediately. Virgil asks him if he had seen *how* man is set loose from 'that ancient witch.' The meaning is that, in his dream, he found no release from her until the grace of heaven intervened. To teach him this was the very purpose of the vision,—that a lower love can be conquered only by a higher, the Siren by 'a lady holy and alert,' the flesh by the

translates *donne* 'lords.' Dante's idea seems to be that mourners are blessed because they do not need to look for comfort beyond themselves—their own souls are the owners and mistresses of consolation, a treasure which their mourning has laid up within them.

[1] Matt. v. 4. 'Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.'

[2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. xxxv. a. 3.

Spirit, earth by heaven. This, therefore, is the comfort promised in the Beatitude—that, as the attraction of the heavens above lays hold of him, that of the earth beneath is broken, and he can tread it underfoot:

> 'Suffice it thee, and strike on earth thy heels,
> Thine eyes turn back to the lure, which whirleth
> The King Eternal with the mighty wheels.'
> Even as the falcon, which at his feet first gazes,
> Then turns to the call, and stretches forward
> Through the desire of the food which draws him there,
> Such I made me, and such, as far as is cleft
> The rock to give a way to him who mounts,
> I went, even to the point where circling is begun.'[1]

The whole figure is very striking. Falconry is the sport of kings,[2] and the great Falconer is the King Eternal. As the human falconer gives his peculiar call, and swings his 'lure' in the air—a contrivance of birds' feathers and food at the end of a long thong—even so God whirls above man's life the lure of 'the mighty wheels,' the vast circlings of the Nine Heavens, that he may draw the soul to Himself by hunger for its proper food, the bread of angels. Dante confesses that he is not yet ready for the vast flight. He compares himself to a falcon which hears its master's cry, and first looks down at its feet which are restrained by the jesses. So Dante looks down at the earth which forms *his* jesses, and feels that all he can meantime do is to turn to the great Falconer's call, and stretch himself towards the heavenly lure—not, as Ruskin thinks, the 'Fortuna Major' of the geomants, but of God. It is not much perhaps, but it is at least the beginning of the comfort promised by the Beatitude: it carries him with uplifted head up the entire length of the passage

[1] *Purg.* xix. 61-69. For the same allurement of the Heavens, compare Canto xiv. 148-150.

[2] 'Falcons and hawks were allotted to degrees and orders of men according to rank and station,—for instance, to royalty the jerfalcons, to an earl the peregrine, to a yeoman the goshawk, to a priest the sparrow-hawk, and to a knave or servant the useless kestrel' (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Art. 'Falconry').

between the two walls of hard rock which at last open out upon the Fifth Cornice.[1]

[1] The Ruskin reference is *Munera Pulveris*, iii. 89. In contrast to this lure of the Heavens we have the comparison of Geryon, the demon of Fraud, to a falcon whose lure is some fraudulent soul whom he bears down to his special Bolgia in Circle viii. (*Inf.* xvii. 127-136). On the other hand, the Celestial Eagle is compared to a falcon issuing from its hood (*Par.* xix. 34-39).

CHAPTER XVII

Terrace V—Avarice

1. *The Discipline of the Sin*

The Terrace where Avarice is punished and purged away contains the same two forms of the sin which are set in the Fourth Circle of Hell,—Miserliness and Prodigality: both greedy of money, the one to hoard, the other to squander. Dante finds the penitents lying face downward on the earth, repeating with such deep sighs that he could hardly make out the words, the Vulgate of Psalm cxix. 25: '*Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*,' '*My soul cleaveth unto the dust.*' One of the souls, who turns out to be Pope Adrian v., explains to the poets the meaning of the punishment and discipline:

> 'What Avarice does is here declared
> In the purgation of the souls converted,
> And no more bitter pain the Mountain hath.
> Even as our eye did not uplift itself
> On high, being fastened upon earthly things,
> So justice here hath sunk it to the earth.
> As Avarice quenched to every good
> Our love, whence power to work was lost,
> So justice here doth hold us fast
> Bound and imprisoned in the hands and feet;
> And so long as it pleases the just Lord,
> So long shall we stay immovable and outstretched.'[1]

The penalty is simply the natural and inevitable recoil of Avarice upon the moral nature. The sin consists essentially in the cleaving of the soul to the dust, a delibe-

[1] *Purg.* xix. 115-126. The word *converse* in l. 116 is taken by some in a moral sense,—converted from sin. Others take it as referring to the attitude of the penitents,—turned upon their faces on the pavement.

rate preference and choice of the earth before God. It is this contrast between God and the dust which constitutes its peculiar baseness. As Aquinas says: 'We may rank sins in regard of the good on which the human heart is inordinately fixed; and the less that is, the more unseemly is the sin: for it is baser to bow to an inferior good than to a higher and better one. But the good of exterior things is the lowest of human goods: for it is less than the good of the body, and that is less than the good of the soul, and that is less than the good that is for man in God. And in this way the sin of covetousness, whereby the human heart is subjected even to exterior things, has in some sense a greater deformity than the rest.'[1] For years these souls had fixed their eyes on the things of earth, and now they find they cannot lift them to heavenly things, even though they long to do so. They deliberately turned their backs on Heaven, and the just punishment of Heaven is that they cannot turn their faces to it. The very earth for which they gave up God is now their torment—their souls cleave to it by force of the very habits which they have learned to hate. It was in order to escape this terrible pain and degradation that Virgil urged Dante to strike his heels on the earth, to trample its dust under foot, and to lift his eyes to the lures of the King Eternal and the 'Fortuna Major' of 'the mighty wheels.' In short, the punishment is simply the fulfilment of Christ's words: 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'[2] They laid up their treasure on earth; and now on that same earth they themselves are laid face downwards, their hearts beating sadly enough against the dust they loved too well.

Along with this earthliness of soul goes a second punishment,—the binding of the hands and feet, that is, the paralysis for a time of the active powers in the direction of good. The hands that were never reached out in generous giving, and the feet that never moved on any errand of mercy, are now powerless in the bonds of the old selfish habit. Miser and prodigal

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxviii. a. 5. [2] Matt. vi. 21.

alike had given every faculty to the gaining of money, and this absorbing love of it 'quenched,' as Adrian says, 'their love to every good,' and with it all power to do good works. This too is why they lie so near the edge of the Terrace that Dante and Virgil have to walk at the foot of the cliff on the inner side, 'as one goes along a wall close to the battlements.'[1] The meaning is that they are set as near as possible to the edge of the precipice which falls down to the Terrace of Sloth, to indicate the power of that sin still within them. Accidia is a torpor in the pursuit of the true good; and these souls, in whom Avarice has quenched the love of good, still hang on the edge of that sin. With tears and sighs they lie there lamenting that woeful squandering of the treasure of righteous love, for the sake of hoarding up the dust. Pope Adrian declares that the Mountain has no pain more bitter. Powerless to turn to that Heaven which they now know to be the only blessedness; lying there year after year face to face with that empty, barren, unsatisfying earth for which they bartered God; eager to do good, yet motionless through lack of love of it: no wonder they find it bitter, especially as they are unable to ward off the pains of memory by work and action.

Between the souls here and those lost in Hell for the same sin, Ruskin draws a contrast which, I think, can scarcely be substantiated. The Avaricious in the *Inferno* are irredeemable, he holds, because they represent contentious, competitive covetousness. The two tides of Misers and Prodigals flowing in opposite directions, and hurling weights at each other, stand for the fluctuations of wealth, which Dante compares to 'the alternate suction and surrender of Charybdis.' 'This weariness of contention is the chief element of their torture'; and Plutus, their guardian demon, 'is specially and definitely the Spirit of Contention or Competition, or Evil Commerce; because, as I showed before, this kind of commerce "makes all men strangers"; his speech is therefore unintelligible,

[1] *Purg.* xx. 4-9.

and no single soul of all those ruined by him *has recognizable features.*

'On the other hand, the redeemable sins of avarice and prodigality are, in Dante's sight, those which are without deliberate or calculated operation. The lust, or lavishness, of riches can be purged, so long as there has been no servile consistency of dispute and competition for them. The sin is spoken of as that of degradation by the love of earth; it is purified by deeper humiliation—the souls crawl on their bellies; their chant is, "my soul cleaveth unto the dust." But the spirits thus condemned are all recognizable, and even the worst examples of the thirst for gold, which they are compelled to tell the histories of during the night, are of men swept by the passion of avarice into violent crime, but not sold to its steady work.'[1]

Ruskin's insight into Dante is usually so keen and intuitive that it may seem presumption to differ from him. Nevertheless, it is nowhere stated or implied by Dante that no soul on this Terrace had ever been engaged in competitive and contentious rivalry for wealth with his fellows, and the thing is inconceivable in itself. Dante certainly did not mean to say that no man who engages in the competition of commerce is capable of repentance and redemption. What he does mean is surely this: that repentance lays its arresting hand on all that evil competition and unresting rolling and clashing of its heavy tides, and flings the converted soul down into a compulsory rest and immobility which are quite as hard to bear, because they mean powerlessness to do anything that is worth doing. Probably the souls here have not been so long engaged in the evil competition: they are, as Ruskin says, still recognizable,—they have not rolled about in the markets of the world so long that the divine image and superscription are worn away finally and for ever.

The story of the conversion of Pope Adrian v., who explains the punishments of the Terrace, is of great interest, if for no other reason than that it was brought

[1] *Munera Pulveris*, iii. 88.

about by his elevation to the Papacy. He begins by informing Dante of the dignity he once held on earth, using the old official phrase and language: 'first, *scias quod ego fui successor Petri*.' Ottobuono de' Fieschi of Genoa was, at the time of his election, the Cardinal-deacon of S. Adriano, and his family, he tells Dante, took their title of Counts of Lavagna from the little river of that name between the towns of Sestri and Chiavari in the Eastern Riviera. His term of office was little more than a month: elected on July 12, 1276, he was dead on August 17, of the same year. When his kindred came to congratulate him on his election, his reply was, 'Would that ye came to a cardinal in good health, not to a dying Pope.' In point of fact, 'he was not crowned, consecrated, or even ordained priest.'[1] His account of his conversion is as follows:

> 'One month and little more I proved how weighs
> The great mantle on him who guards it from the mire,
> So that a feather seem all the other burdens.
> My conversion, ah woe is me! was tardy;
> But, how I was made the Roman Pastor,
> Thus I discovered the life which is a lie.
> I saw that there the heart was not at rest,
> Nor farther in that life could one ascend;
> Wherefore of this a love was kindled in me.
> Up to that point, a wretched soul and separate
> From God was I, wholly given to avarice;
> Now, as thou seest, here am I punished for it.'[2]

There is said to be no historical evidence to confirm this self-accusation of deep and life-long avarice; but the reference in the end of the Canto to the morals of the Fieschi family seems to imply that their evil life was notorious in Dante's day. Adrian in this passage traces his conversion to its various sources. The first, if one is not mistaken, is the moral shock which the manner of his election gave him. The usual translation of line 127 is '*when* I was made the Roman Pastor,' and this, of course, is not necessarily wrong. Nevertheless if we preserve the common meaning of *come*, 'how,' it would emphasize the manner in which his election was

[1] Milman's *Latin Christianity*, Bk. XI. chap. iv.
[2] *Purg.* xix. 103-114.

brought about.[1] We know as a matter of fact that this gave him so great a shock that, almost with his dying breath 'he revoked the law concerning the conclave promulgated by Gregory X., either on account of sufferings endured in his incarceration, or because he recognized that the strict observance of the form was impossible.' This was the celebrated law passed two years before to regulate the Papal elections, in consequence of a dispute of three years immediately prior to Gregory's own elevation. On the death of a Pope, the cardinals were to assemble in the town where he died. They were then shut up in one common hall of the late Pope's palace, all exits and entrances being walled up, save one window for the admission of food. 'Should the pope not be elected within three days, then were the cardinals to be allowed one dish only at dinner and the same at supper for the five following days, after which they were to be restricted to wine, bread, and water. All intercourse with the outer world was forbidden under pain of excommunication.' In short, the cardinals were virtually to be starved into swift election, an extraordinary mode of choosing the man who is worthy to be God's Vicar on earth. 'If, as the Church asserts,' writes Gregorovius, 'the papal election is the work of heavenly inspiration, then must hunger and thirst appear as curious means of attracting the Holy Spirit to the aid of dissentient and procrastinating cardinals. It may cause surprise to the unbelieving that the High Priest of Christianity should be elected by a few squabbling old men, immured like prisoners in a room without air or light, while the magistrates of the city guarded the approaches, and the excited populace surrounded the palace, in order to await the moment when the wall should be thrown down, in order to cast themselves on their knees before a man,

[1] The translation of ll. 107, 108 given above is, I admit, very rugged. But if my view is correct, the ruggedness represents the state of agitation into which the mere recollection of what he had suffered at his election threw Adrian. He cannot speak of it save in broken ejaculations: 'But—*how* I was made the Roman Pastor!—*thus* I discovered the life which is a lie!'

hitherto unknown, who with hand upraised in blessing, issued from the conclave weeping or radiant with joy.' This was the new law under which Adrian was elected, and it was manipulated for his own ends by Charles of Anjou, who was at the time Senator of Rome. 'With unsparing severity he shut up the cardinals in the Lateran, where he had the windows of their room so firmly walled up that scarcely a bird could have found entrance. The French and Italian cardinals wrangled for eight days, after water, wine, and bread only were supplied them; nevertheless Charles's adherents found themselves well looked after and were able to maintain an illegal correspondence with the King.'[1] This long unholy wrangle between the French and the Italians issued in the election of this Pope who speaks to Dante, and the only act of his Papacy was to revoke at once the law of the Conclave under which he was chosen. In the light of all this we are surely justified in reading a deeper meaning into his words, above translated:

> 'Ma come fatto fui Roman Pastore,
> Così scopersi la vita bugiarda.'

The *manner* of his election gave him a deep and lasting impression of the unreality and falseness of the whole thing,—the choice, which professedly was guided by the inspiration of God, being nothing more than the playing off against one another of national, party, and individual interests, ambitions, and hatreds. It is, perhaps, this feeling of moral disgust which makes him so eager now to disclaim the Papal dignity—thus gained, it was a poor unworthy show, a living 'lie.' That it represents Dante's own feeling is proved by his letter of indignant remonstrance to the Italian Cardinals when they met in conclave at Carpentras near Avignon in 1314, to elect a successor to Clement V. He calls them in scorn oxen that kick and drag the ark of God in different directions.[2]

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 467-475 (English Translation).

[2] *Epis.* viii. 5. Compare St. Peter Damian's denunciation of prelates in *Par.* xxi. 124-135.

Adrian's short experience of little more than a month was long enough, he says, to teach him how heavy 'the great mantle' was, if one wished to guard it from the mire. It is amusing to find Vernon paraphrasing this as 'wearing it with dignity,'—perhaps the last thought that would have occurred to Dante in such a connection. The meaning is much more definite, and quite obvious, if we remember who the speaker is. He is a man 'wholly given to avarice' up to the last few weeks of a long life. Then the shock of his election to the Papacy startled him into horror of his sin: he felt that his heart had never been at rest in earthly things, and the fact that he had now reached the highest pinnacle this life could offer, only deepened his sense of the vanity of it all.[1] And now it was passing away, and his soul was cleaving to its dust. But dust is not mire; and he resolved to guard 'the great mantle' during the few days God allowed him to wear it from trailing in the mud, from becoming the victim of those baser, dirtier, more dishonourable forms of avarice which gathered round the Papacy as their natural prey. He found it no easy task thus to guard it from his own and others' greed, for probably both are included.

If one form of Avarice is as dust and another as mire, there is a third of which Dante chooses the rock as symbol. It is in the Moat of the Simoniacs in the Eighth Circle of Hell; and his attitude here as he stoops over this prostrate Pope cannot but recall his form as he bends lower still over another who is worse than prostrate. For if common Avarice casts a man to the ground, Simony sinks him into it, buries him alive in the hard rock of his own merciless greed. As Dante stoops over Nicholas III. and the long non-apostolic succession of simoniacal Popes in the rock beneath him, he regards them as assassins of the Church, and breaks into a passion of indignant denunciation.[2] Here, on the contrary, before a Pope who, whatever his sins, strove at least to save 'the great mantle' from the mire of

[1] For the restlessness of Avarice, see *Inf.* vii. 61-66; *Conv.* iv. 12, 13.
[2] *Inf.* xix. 31-133.

base avarice, he cannot refrain from sinking on his knees in reverence. So far as it is reverence for himself as Pope, it is rebuked by Adrian the moment he discovers by the nearness of Dante's voice that he is kneeling:

> 'Make straight thy legs, and rise up, brother,'
> He answered; 'err not; fellowservant am I
> With thee and with the others to one Power.
> If thou didst ever that holy Gospel sound
> Which sayeth *Neque nubent* understand,
> Well canst thou see why I thus speak.'[1]

The use of the word 'brother' instead of 'son,' indicates the renunciation of his superiority as spiritual Father. 'I am thy fellowservant,' taken from Rev. xix. 10 and xxii. 9, has a double edge: it repudiates at once the exaggerated humility of the '*Servus servorum*,' Servant of servants, which, since Gregory the Great, was one of the official styles of the Popes;[2] and that Papal grasping at spiritual and temporal power which sought to make all men serve it. This Pope has learnt that there is a higher world of equality of service of the one same Power. The 'holy Gospel sound,' '*Neque nubent*,' is Christ's statement that the bond of marriage is dissolved in the world to come: 'In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.'[3] The first reference is to the ties of flesh and blood, and Dante here extends it to the Pope as the spouse of the Church. It is uncertain whether he meant it to cover holy orders. These, according to the Church, impress a 'character,' which is defined as 'a certain spiritual and indelible sign,' and it might be argued that this being indelible, a priest is a priest for ever, in the next world as in this. As a matter of fact, Adrian, as already stated, was never ordained to the priesthood, and therefore the question does not arise. What Dante really wishes to do is to bring the office of Pope into

[1] *Purg.* xix. 133-138.

[2] In *Inf.* xv. 112, the title is used sarcastically of Boniface VIII.

[3] Matt. xxii. 30. For the figure of the Pope as the Church's spouse, see *Inf.* xix. 56, and *Purg.* xxiv. 22.

line in this matter with that of Emperor. Both offices are ordained by God for certain earthly ends, and therefore lapse with the earthly life. 'Cæsar I *was*, and *am* Justinian,' says the great Emperor in Paradise.[1] It is a law which holds good of every earthly rank: the Count of Montefeltro, for example, disclaims his title: 'I *was* of Montefeltro, I *am* Buonconte.' Pope, Emperor, Count—all at death lapse back into the primal manhood, the naked personality, in which all men are equal before God.

Adrian now desires to resume his 'greater care,' the weeping which 'ripens' the fruits of repentance, and therefore begs Dante to pass on. As he goes he gives him a message for his niece Alagia, who was the wife of Dante's friend Moroello Malaspina. He is evidently not quite sure how far he can rely on an interest in her prayers: 'good in herself,' he fears that the evil family to which she belongs—'our house'—may taint her by example. Through her prayers it was, perhaps, that he was already so high up as this Terrace, for without some gracious help he must still have been wandering with the other tardy penitents in the Ante-Purgatory below. If she fail him, there is no other of all his kindred who crowded round him with joy when he wore 'the great mantle,' to whose love the old, lonely, forgotten man can now appeal:

> 'And she alone is left to me beyond.'[2]

With great reluctance Dante passes on. 'The sponge' of his curiosity, to use his own figure, is not yet completely filled with water; but he recognizes that the penitent's wish for purity is better than his own for knowledge. His Guide and he therefore take their way close along the base of the rocky rampart, the penitents, as we saw, lying between them and the edge of the precipice which falls to the Terrace below. The sight of them distilling drop by drop

> Through their eyes the ill which all the world pervades,

rouses his indignation:

[1] *Par.* vi. 10.

[2] *Purg.* xix. 139-145.

> Accursed mayst thou be, thou old She-wolf
> That more than all the other beasts hast prey,
> Because of hunger infinitely hollow!
> O heaven, in whose circling it seems to be believed
> That the conditions here below transmuted are,
> When will he come thro' whom she shall depart?

This passage seems decisive of the meaning of the She-wolf which met him at the outset of his pilgrimage—the fiercest of the three wild beasts which opposed his deliverance from the dark and savage wood. Whatever more she may symbolize, her primary significance is Avarice. In the description of her in the *Inferno* there is the same bottomless hunger, only the keener for being fed, the same multitude of her victims, the same cry for a deliverer. Here, however, the cry is much vaguer: perhaps in the interval Dante felt that the Greyhound, whoever he was, who was to hunt her down and drive her back to Hell, had failed to fulfil his hopes.[1]

While the primary meaning is thus undoubtedly the vice of Avarice, there seems to be good ground for identifying the She-wolf, in a secondary sense, with the Papacy, as the chief representative of the sin. As we have just seen, the first soul singled out on this Terrace is an avaricious Pope. In the Fourth Circle of Hell, guarded by the 'accursed wolf' Plutus, Dante sees on the left hand, and therefore among the Misers, a great many tonsured heads, and Virgil informs him,

> 'These were clerics, who have no covering
> Of hair upon the head, and Popes and Cardinals,
> In whom doth Avarice practise its excess.'[2]

When the vice grows so vile as to turn the very Church into its tool and victim, as in Simony, a special *Bolgia* is provided for it in the Eighth Circle, and simoniacal Popes, in a long infernal succession, are driven head-foremost, one on the top of the other, into the heart of the rock. It is not meant, of course, that the Papacy had any monopoly of the vice, but that it was most deeply polluted with it, and perhaps also that its

[1] *Purg.* xx. 10-15; *Inf.* i. 49-60; 91-111.

[2] *Inf.* vii. 46-48.

power of corruption was greater in men who professed solemnly to have given up the world. Probably the deliverer Dante longed for was some form of the temporal power to restrain the Papal greed; but he had learnt by bitter experience that the temporal power only curbed the avarice of Popes in order the more freely to indulge its own. A great part of the Twentieth Canto is occupied with a description of the insatiable cupidity of the royal house of France which shrank from no crime. There is a note of despondency in Dante's question,

> When will he come through whom she shall depart?

We may conjecture that the passage was written during that period of suspense when Henry VII. was hesitating about his descent into Italy. For avarice, the Papacy had sold herself to a king who, for avarice, had bought her, and Heaven seemed to look down with careless eyes. The She-wolf ravaged Church and State with impartial greed, and no revolution of the stars brought the predestined man, born to hunt her back to her native Hell—

> There from whence envy first did let her loose.[1]

[1] *Inf.* i. 111.

CHAPTER XVIII

Terrace V—Avarice

2. *Denunciation of the House of Capet*

We come now to the 'whip' and the 'bridle' of Avarice. As the poets pass on 'with steps slow and scant,' their attention is arrested by one voice which rises into articulate speech above the general weeping and moaning of the prostrate penitents. It is that of Hugh Capet, King of France, and founder of the famous Capetian dynasty, who explains the mode of their meditations. In the first place, they find expression in words according to individual impulse. They do indeed chant in unison; but whether with loud voice or low depends on the strength of the 'affection' at the moment for liberality or against avarice. That is why Hugh Capet's was the only voice Dante heard—he alone of all the souls on that part of the Terrace was sufficiently moved by the inward impulse.[1] We may suppose two reasons for this peculiarity, to which Dante draws special attention. The first is that, as Avarice is an individual vice, assuming a separate form in each separate soul, so must there be a certain individuality in the meditations by which its power is broken. The second relates to the fluctuations of the 'affection.' As we saw, Avarice 'extinguishes love to every good,' and, once extinguished, it is impossible to rekindle it into a warm glowing flame in a moment. The rise and fall of the voice, sinking at times to mere sobbing and weeping, represents the ebb and flow of that 'love of good' which Avarice has a peculiar power

[1] *Purg.* xx. 118-123.

to quench. To the penitent soul it comes back at first only in momentary impulses.

Nevertheless, these impulses, though momentary and fluctuating, Dante seems to say, are peculiarly intense. In the other Terraces where the souls themselves repeat examples of the virtue and the vice, as those of Sloth and Sensuality, it is to be noted that they simply rehearse them in the form of historical statements of fact, such as, to take an instance, 'Mary ran with haste into the hill-country.' But here historical statement is exchanged for *direct personal address and intercourse*:

> And I by peradventure heard 'Sweet Mary!'
> In front of us called out thus in the wailing,
> Even as a woman doth who is in travail;
> And in continuance: 'So poor wast thou,
> As may be witnessed by that hostelry
> Where thou didst lay thy holy burden down.'[1]

In a writer so careful as Dante, this change from historical statement to personal address must have some purpose beyond that of mere variety. We may regard it as a sign of the intensity of the impulse of the 'affection' which urges them to speech: it carries them beyond mere historical example into personal intercourse—they see and hear the men and women, they stand before them as in life, they speak with them face to face. It seems as if Dante wished to tell us that this sin yields to nothing but personal contact and intercourse. No mere recitation of historical examples of Liberality will create the love of that virtue—you must live with liberal souls until you catch the contagion of their generosity. On the other hand, abhorrence of Avarice is best awakened by being brought into personal contact with the victims of that vice: the sin and meanness of it become doubly hideous and hateful when one sees them embodied in a man and working out in life and action. In all the Terraces, Dante aims at some correspondence between the form of the meditation and the sin to be purged away; and

[1] *Purg.* xx. 19-24.

it is difficult to see what it is here, if it does not lie somewhere in the direction indicated.

The speaker at the moment of Dante's passing was Hugh Capet, and it cannot but strike the reader as something very peculiar, to say the least, that it is a *man* who breaks out into the cry of 'Sweet Mary!' exactly after the fashion of a woman in travail, his very voice wailing into the same kind of agony.[1] The mere fact that it is the birth of Christ he is commemorating is not a sufficient explanation; the whole question being just why this should draw the voice of the founder of a great dynasty of kings into a sympathetic wail, as if he too felt the same pangs of travail. Strange and even grotesque as it may sound, the reason seems to lie in the fact that he *was* the founder of such a dynasty. When he thought of the poor inn where Mary 'laid her holy burden down,' he could not help moaning to think of that *un*holy burden of his own progeny, whose sins of avarice he is just about to relate. That 'holy burden' of Mary was, in the faith of Christendom, the King of kings, laying aside His royal robes, and stooping to the poverty of the manger of Bethlehem; whereas his own sinful brood climbed up to kinghood from the stable (for he himself, he says, was only the son of a butcher), and shrank from no vice or crime that Avarice could suggest, in order to increase their wealth, and territory, and power. There is, of course, an element of grotesqueness in thus, as it were, transforming Hugh Capet into a woman in travail; but it will be difficult to account for it in any other way than by this contrast between the holy birth at Bethlehem and the unholy brood which he had brought forth to undo the work of Christ:

> 'I was the root of that malignant plant
> Which overshadows all the Christian world,
> So that good fruit is seldom gathered from it.'[2]

The second example of voluntary poverty is drawn

[1] Comp. *Par.* xv. 133. 'The Virgin Mary was invoked by women in labour, as the virgin goddess Diana had been in Pagan times' (*Paradiso* in Temple Classics, p. 190).

[2] *Purg.* xx. 43-45.

from the history of Rome,—the 'good Fabricius,' who preferred poverty with virtue to wealth with vice. The reference is to Caius Fabricius (Consul B.C. 282, Censor 275), in Dante's regard one of the most heroic types of ancient Roman virtue. Two instances of his utter contempt of wealth are referred to in the *Convito* and the *De Monarchia*: his refusal of the rich gifts offered by the Samnites when he was negotiating with them for peace, and of the splendid bribes with which Pyrrhus of Epirus strove to buy him over to his service, when he was arranging an exchange of prisoners of war. 'Has not Fabricius left us a lofty example of resisting avarice, when, poor man as he was, for the faith by which he was bound to the republic, he laughed to scorn the great weight of gold which was offered him, and refused it, scorning it with words which became him well. His story too is confirmed by our poet in the sixth *Æneid*, where he speaks of "Fabricius strong in his poverty."'[1] He stands out in the poet's imagination as a Roman of the old simple heroic breed, incorruptible in his loyalty to his country, unseduced by the growing love of luxury, contented with his hereditary farm, and dying as he had lived a poor man.

The third example brings us back to the Christian Church in the person of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia in the fourth century, sometimes called St. Nicholas of Bari in Apulia, because his body was transported thither some seven or eight centuries later, and dear to the hearts of the children of Christendom as Santa Klaus. The story of his 'largess to the maidens,' as told in *The Golden Legend*, is that, hearing how a nobleman who had fallen into poverty purposed to make a living out of the shame of his three daughters, Nicholas secretly by night threw three bags of gold into his house at different times. The maidens being thus well dowered were all honourably married. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that Dante tells the story with a side glance at Bishops who used their

[1] *De. Mon.* ii. 5 (Church); *Conv.* iv. 5; *Æn.* vi. 843, 'parvoque potentem Fabricium.'

gold for a very different purpose. Fabricius and Nicholas represent respectively that contempt for wealth, and that generous use of it, without which neither State nor Church can remain rich in strength and purity.[1]

These, and such as these, are the souls the penitents converse with during the day, obviously because Liberality is a virtue of the daylight, open and generous, with nothing dark or underhand to conceal. The night brings on 'a contrary sound.' The idea is, perhaps, that the nightfall recalls the memory of their own schemes of Avarice over which they once brooded in the darkness, and which must now be fought by resolute contemplation of men and women who perished in their greed. Seven examples are given, as if to show the entire gamut of this vice. As Dr. Moore points out, they are arranged in three groups, parallel to the three examples of the virtue: '(1) two instances from profane history or legend; (2) three instances from Scripture; and (3) again two instances from profane history.'[2] They seem to be chosen to show how 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,'[3]—sins against kindred and self, against God and His Church, against the sacred laws of hospitality, against the human race. 'Then,' that is, during the night,

> 'we recall Pygmalion,
> Of whom a traitor, thief, and parricide,
> His own gluttonous wish for gold did make;
> And the misery of the avaricious Midas,
> That followed his inordinate demand,
> At which forevermore one needs must laugh.
> Of the foolish Achan each one then bethinks him,
> How he stole the spoils, so that the wrath
> Of Joshua here appears to bite him still.
> Then we accuse Sapphira with her husband;
> We praise the kicks which Heliodorus had;
> And in infamy the whole mount encircleth
> Polymnestor who slew Polydorus.

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[1] In Art, St. Nicholas is generally represented with three balls for the three purses of gold. For other interpretations, see Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, ii. 457.

[2] *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 253.

[3] 1 Tim. vi. 10 (R.V.).

> Last of all the cry here is: "Crassus, tell us,
> For thou dost know, of what savour is the gold?"'[1]

The head of this black list, Pygmalion, King of Tyre, was a traitor to his kindred for the lust of gold. He slew his uncle Sichæus, husband of his sister Dido, taking him treacherously at the very altar, for the sake of his wealth.[2] The second example shows how absurdly a man befools himself through Avarice. It is the well-known story of Midas, the Phrygian king, who asked from Bacchus that whatever he touched might turn into gold. His greed nearly cost him his life, his very food changing into the precious metal. It is probably an allegory of the rich man whose very wealth destroys his appetite, or whose miserly heart will not allow him to enjoy his food, because it represents so much gold. This is why the penitents laugh at Midas: he stands for starvation in the midst of boundless wealth.

The Scriptural group consists of an example from the Old Testament, another from the New, and a third from the Apocrypha; and all three may be described as attempts to cheat and rob God. Achan's theft of spoil dedicated to God is called 'foolish' because he bartered for corruptible gold his great inheritance among the chosen people. The fraudulence of Ananias and Sapphira was of a still darker hue, cloaking itself in the garb of generosity to the Church, and involving, as St. Peter says, 'a lie to the Holy Ghost.' The story of Heliodorus tells us of an impious and high-handed attempt to rob the Temple of God. In 2 Maccabees iii. we read that Seleucus, King of Syria, sent his treasurer Heliodorus to seize the treasures which a renegade Jew had informed him were laid up in the Temple in Jerusalem. When Heliodorus approached the Treasury, 'there appeared an horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering and glorious in his vesture and apparel, and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness

[1] *Purg.* xx. 103-117. [2] *Æn.* i. 340 ff.

of gold.' All three are attempts to defraud God, and all three are punished by God's own hand—the heathen sinner less severely, probably because his light was less.

The two final examples are from profane history. The first is one single act of avarice, the second, a whole life's career of it. Shortly before the fall of Troy, Priam, fearing for the safety of his youngest son Polydorus, sent him, along with a large sum of money, to Polymnestor, King of the Thracian Chersonesus. The Thracian king, the moment he saw Troy crushed, broke the sacred laws of hospitality, slew his guest, and seized his treasures. It is at the close of Virgil's account of the murder that the well-known words occur which must be examined more carefully before we leave this Terrace:

> Quid non mortalia pectora cogis
> Auri sacra fames![1]

The last example is Marcus Licinius Crassus, surnamed *Dives*, the Wealthy, whose love of money took the world for its prey. After telling how his estate rose from 300 to 7100 talents, Plutarch says: 'The greatest part of this fortune, if we may declare the truth, to his extreme disgrace, was gleaned from war and from fires; for he made a traffic of the public calamities.' To this are to be added his vast speculations in slaves, mines, and lands; while, on the other hand, justice compels us to record that he did what few are inclined to do among ourselves, lent money to his friends without interest. In the year 55 B.C. he was consul along with Pompey, and received the province of Syria, from which he hoped to wring inexhaustible wealth. Two years later his dreams of avarice came to a sudden and tragic end. The Parthian general Surenas defeated him in battle and sent his head to King Orodes, who is said, in mockery of his notorious thirst for wealth, to have poured molten gold into his mouth. It is in allusion to this that the penitents ask him 'the savour of the gold'—the taste it has in death. As Scar-

[1] *Æn.* iii. 22-57.

tazzini points out, these seven examples correspond to the seven 'daughters of Avarice' according to Aquinas, Pygmalion representing Treachery; Midas, Restlessness; Achan, Fraud; Ananias and Sapphira, Perjury; Heliodorus, Deceit; Polymnestor, Inhumanity; and Crassus, Violence.[1]

These are the great examples of Avarice which act as 'bridle' to the whole Terrace; but Hugh Capet has a private supplementary list,—the members of his own house. There seems to be no doubt that Dante has in some way confused Hugh Capet the King and his father Hugh the Great, the statements referring sometimes to the one, sometimes to the other. Fortunately the divergences from historical facts do not obscure the fierce indictment Dante hurls against the royal house of France, which he plainly regards as the crowning example of the vice of Avarice on a grand hereditary scale.[2] The passage is as follows:

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxviii. a. 8.

[2] The chief points of divergence are the following:

(1) The Hugh Capet here says he was 'the son of a butcher of Paris.' This was the generally received tradition in Dante's day (Villani, iv. 4), and doubtless he was not sorry to humble the pride of the house by recalling it. But the tradition refers not to Hugh the King, but to his father Hugh the Great, who was in reality a descendant of the Counts of Paris.

(2) The speaker says he grasped the reins of power at the time when 'the ancient kings' came to an end, with the exception of one who 'gave himself to grey garments,' *i.e.* became a monk. This reference to a monk shows that Dante has confused the Carlovingian Kings with the Merovingian. The last Merovingian King was Childeric III., who was deposed by Pepin in 752, and compelled to retire to the monastery of Sithieu at St. Omer, where he died three years later. Then came the Carlovingian dynasty, which lasted down to 987. The last of this line was Charles, Duke of Lorraine, whom France refused to accept as king because he was a vassal of the German Emperor. It was at this point Hugh Capet seized the throne (his father, Hugh the Great, had died more than thirty years before). This Charles of Lorraine is obviously the last of 'the ancient kings' referred to, but, since he never became a monk, it is evident that he is confused with the last of the Merovingians, Childeric III., who died more than two hundred years earlier.

(3) The speaker says his son's head received 'the widowed crown' of France. It is difficult to understand this. The speaker cannot be, except by confusion, Hugh the Great, since he was dead for more than thirty years when his son became king. If the speaker is Hugh the King, then it was to his own head 'the widowed crown' was first promoted. The difficulty is not quite removed by the fact that he associated his son Robert with him in the government, and had him crowned in the year 988.

'So long as the great dowry of Provence
Out of my blood took not the sense of shame,
'Twas little worth, but still it did no evil.
There began with both force and falsehood
Its rapine; and thereafter, for amends,
Ponthieu and Normandy it seized, and Gascony.
Charles came to Italy, and, for amends,
A victim made of Conradin, and then
Thrust Thomas back to heaven, for amends.
A time I see, not very distant now,
Which draws another Charles forth from France,
The better to make known both him and his.
Without arms he issues thence alone, and with the lance
That Judas jousted with; and that he thrusts
So that he makes the paunch of Florence burst.
He thence not land, but sin and shame
Shall win, for himself so much more grievous,
As the more light he counts such wrong.
The other, who late went forth a captive from a ship,
See I his daughter sell, and haggle over her,
As do the corsairs with the other women-slaves.
O Avarice, what more canst thou do to us,
Since thou my blood to thee hast drawn so
It careth not for its own proper flesh?'[1]

Never was there a more bitter indictment of a royal house. Its ruling passion was Avarice; its dark shadow lay across the Christian world, cutting off God's sunlight, and dooming it to barrenness. The beginning of its career of rapine was 'the great Provencal dowry,'—the reference being to the marriage of Louis IX. and his brother, Charles of Anjou, to Margaret and Beatrice, daughters of the Count of Provence. Dante traces to this alliance all the disastrous intrusions of France into the affairs of Italy. Villani expressly says that the invasion of Apulia by Charles of Anjou was due to the determination of his wife Beatrice to be a queen like her three elder sisters.[2] The reference to Ponthieu, Normandy, and Gascony relates to the struggle between France and England for possession of those provinces. There is probably some chronological confusion; but, as Dr. Oelsner says, Dante is 'right in all the essential facts, which held good, as stated by him, for many

[1] *Purg.* xx. 61-84.
[2] *Chronicle*, vi. 89. See *Purg.* vii. 128 and p. 106.

years. Thus, Villani says that Edward III., when on the point of invading France in 1346, told his barons that the French King "was wrongfully occupying Gascony, and the county of Ponthieu, which came to him [Edward] with the dowry of his mother, and that he was holding Normandy by fraud" (xii. 63).'[1] Dante plainly took the same view many years earlier.

The reference to Charles of Anjou in ll. 67-69 has a peculiar bitterness of sarcasm. The threefold repetition of the words 'for amends' at once arrests attention. The irony is obvious, but its precise point is not quite so easily seen. It consists in the fact that a greater sin throws a lesser into insignificance, and thereby makes a species of 'amends' for it. Dante gives two examples elsewhere. In Caïna, Camicion de' Pazzi says he is 'waiting for Carlino *to excuse* him.' What he means is that his kinsman Carlino de' Pazzi would do a still darker deed of treachery, which would make his own sin appear a mere trifle.[2] The other instance is a few lines further on in the present Canto. Hugh Capet narrates the outrage on Boniface VIII.,—'in order that the future evil and the past *may seem less*.'[3] That outrage was the crowning sin of the wicked dynasty: it threw all past crimes into the shade, and nothing the future might contain could ever equal it. This is the special point of irony in the words 'for amends': it is the making of one sin seem small by the shock of a greater. The French Kings began their rapine in Provence, and turned this into a mere trifle by their seizure of Ponthieu, Normandy, and Gascony. Charles of Anjou invaded Italy, and, 'for amends, made a victim of Conradin': the cold-blooded execution of the last of the Hohenstaufens, a mere boy in years, gave the invasion almost the hue of virtue by comparison. This heartless murder was in its turn 'excused' by a worse: 'he then thrust Thomas back to heaven, for amends.' The reference is to the death of St. Thomas Aquinas, which was then commonly attributed to Charles. The story was that

[1] *Purgatorio*, Temple Classics, p. 253.
[2] *Inf.* xxxii. 69.
[3] *Purg.* xx. 85, 86.

when Thomas was summoned by Gregory X. to the Council of Lyons in 1274, Charles asked him before he left Naples what he would reply if the Pope asked about him. 'I shall tell the truth,' said Thomas: an answer which so alarmed the king that he had him poisoned by one of his physicians at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova, near Terracina, on the borders of Campania and Latium. It is only fair to Charles to say that the story is now entirely discredited; but Dante, to whom it was true, regarded the murder of the great theologian and saint as throwing even that of the poor boy Conradin into comparative insignificance. We must remember that it is this same Charles whom we saw singing in the Valley of the Princes below. Dante firmly believed he had committed these crimes, yet on the strength of a story that he had repented on his death-bed, he sets him there on his way to Paradise. So omnipotent did he believe the power of repentance to be, and so wide the arms of God's grace. It also shows that Dante did not, as is too commonly believed, consign men to Heaven or Hell according to his personal loves and hatreds; had he done so, nothing could have been easier than to have swept aside the story of his death-bed repentance, and plunged Charles up to the neck in the River of Blood in the Inferno.

We come now to a second Charles, to whom Dante owed his banishment. In 1300 the Priors of Florence, of whom the poet was one, found it necessary to crush the strife between the Black and White Guelphs by banishing their leaders. In response to the appeal of the Blacks, Boniface VIII. sent Charles of Valois, brother of Philip the Fair, as 'peacemaker' to Florence the following year. His manner of 'peacemaking' was simple enough: he treacherously broke his oaths and pledges, armed his horsemen, flung open the gates to the Blacks, and gave up the city to rapine and bloodshed. This was 'the lance that Judas jousted with'—not merely treachery, but treachery bought and paid for by priests. Even the Guelph Villani states that in

banishing the Whites and Ghibellines and confiscating their property, Charles acted 'by commission of Pope Boniface.'[1] When we remember that Dante himself was one of the exiles, it is no wonder that he is bitter at the Judas who sold him, and more bitter at the priest who bought his treachery.

A third Charles is held up to infamy as one who sold his own flesh and blood—Charles II., son of Charles of Anjou. He is spoken of as one 'who late went forth a captive from a ship,' in reference to his capture in 1284, while still Prince of Salerno, by Roger di Loria, the Sicilian admiral of Peter III. of Aragon. In 1305 he sold his youngest daughter Beatrice to Azzo VIII., Marquis of Este, an old scoundrel, if Dante is to be believed—traitor, parricide, libertine. The only evidence for the vile transaction is a passage in Dino Compagni (iii. 16) in which the cities of Modena and Reggio are named as the price of the beautiful girl.

As Hugh Capet thinks of his descendant haggling over his own flesh and blood, 'as corsairs do over the other women-slaves,' he almost defies Avarice to sink his race lower. Yet there is 'in the lowest deep a lower deep'—the avarice of Philip the Fair, which outraged the very Church of Christ and 'crucified the Son of God afresh':

> 'That less may seem the future evil and the past,
> I see the fleur-de-lys Alagna enter,
> And Christ in His own vicar captive made.
> I see Him yet another time derided;
> I see renewed the vinegar and the gall,
> And between living thieves I see Him slain.
> I see the new Pilate so relentless
> This doth not sate him, but without decree
> He bears his greedy sails into the Temple.
> O my Lord! when shall I be joyful
> To see the vengeance, which, being hidden
> In thy secret counsel, makes thine anger sweet?'[2]

[1] *Chronicle*, viii. 49.

[2] *Purg.* xx. 85-96. The idea seems to be that there is a certain joy in the anger of God because his secret counsel has already ordained the vengeance for such wickedness. Man's anger, even when just, is often bitter, because it seems as if there were no Divine vengeance. Comp. *Par.* xxii. 13-18. Alagna or Anagna is now Anagni.

The outrage on Boniface VIII. in Anagni in 1303 was the final act of the great quarrel for supremacy which he had carried on for years with Philip the Fair. In justice to Philip, it must be confessed that he was but defending the rights of France as a nation. War was going on between France and England, and both countries refused the Pope's arbitration. Boniface, who believed himself master of all Christendom, retorted by the Bull *Clericis laicos*, in which he forbade the clergy to pay taxes to the secular power. Philip replied by forbidding money to be sent out of France, thus cutting off all contributions to Rome. The Pope was forced to yield for the moment, but a new storm broke out over the question of vacant benefices which were claimed by the crown. Philip threw the papal legate into prison; whereupon Boniface addressed another Bull to him, claiming absolute power over kings, and summoning the French clergy to a Council in Rome, to pass sentence on his conduct. The King burnt the Bull in public, and forbade the clergy to go. The outrage at Anagni was the tragic and dramatic ending of the struggle. Philip resolved to capture the old man and arraign him before a Council at Lyons. The plot was entrusted to the hands of William of Nogaret, a doctor of law. In company with Sciarra Colonna, a hereditary enemy of the Pope, Nogaret stormed his palace at Anagni and burst into his audience chamber. The scene is vividly described by Gregorovius. 'They found themselves in the presence of an old man clad in pontifical vestments, the tiara on his head, seated upon a throne, and bowed over a gold cross which he held in his hands. He was resolved to die as Pope. His venerable age and his majestic silence disarmed the men for an instant, then with yells they demanded his degradation, declared that they would carry him in chains to Lyons to be deposed, and allowed themselves to descend to insults, which he bore with magnanimity. The wild Sciarra seized him by the arm, dragged him from the throne, and would have thurst his dagger in his breast. Nogaret held his companion

back by force. The ferocity, the excitement, the terror and despair knew no bounds; moderation, however, finally triumphed over passion.'[1] He was thrown into prison and his palace and the cathedral given over to plunder. After three days of imprisonment the citizens rose and set him free; but it was too late. The shock to the proud old man who believed himself the master of the world, seems to have upset his mind. Villani's account of the end has a touch of weirdness: 'Pope Boniface, seeing himself free, and his enemies driven away, did not therefore rejoice in any wise, forasmuch as the pain of his adversity had so entered into his heart and clotted there; wherefore he departed straightway from Anagna with all his court, and came to Rome to S. Peter's to hold a council, purposing to take the heaviest vengeance for his injury and that of Holy Church against the King of France, and whosoever had offended him; but, as it pleased God, the grief which had hardened in the heart of Pope Boniface, by reason of the injury which he had received, produced in him, after he was come to Rome, a strange malady, so that he gnawed at himself as if he were mad, and in this state he passed from this life on the 12th day of October in the year of Christ 1303.'[2]

It is characteristic of Dante that he should see in this outrage a repetition of the Crucifixion of Christ. It may have been suggested, as Dr. Moore thinks, by the Pope's own words. Villani tells us that when Boniface found his palace taken, he said courageously: 'Since, like Jesus Christ, I am willing to be taken and needs must die by treachery, at the least I desire to die as Pope.' But the idea was natural to Dante apart from this. No matter how unworthy a Pope might be, he could never forget that, in virtue of his office, he was Christ's vicar, and therefore that any indignity offered to the office was an insult to Christ Himself.[3] We know

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, v. 590 (English Translation).

[2] *Chronicle*, viii. 63.

[3] It is true that to Dante Boniface was a mere usurper (*Par.* xxvii. 22-27); but to Philip he was rightful Pope, and therefore his outrage was committed upon Christ's representative.

that he sternly consigned Boniface to the Moat of the Simoniacs in the Inferno; none the less did he regard this outrage with abhorrence. He knew it was not an attack on an individual but upon the Church; and the transference of the Papacy to Avignon and the election of Clement V. to be Philip's creature and tool, are the natural and inevitable issues of the outrage. When he says he saw 'Christ in His own vicar captive made,' it is not the mere imprisonment of Boniface for three days he is thinking of: it is the degradation and enslavement of the Church by the State, of the spiritual power by the temporal. The man who thus delivered Christ to His enemies is called 'the new Pilate,' and William of Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna are the '*living* thieves' between whom Christ in His vicar is once more slain. The word 'living' indicates the contrast between the modern thieves and the ancient. The latter 'received the due reward of their deeds' in death; the former lived to enjoy the fruits of their robbery.[1]

The second crime charged against Philip is his inhuman suppression of the great military Order of Knights Templars on the ground of heresy, sacrilege, and unnatural vices. Nothing was really proved against the Templars. In their confessions, wrung from them by torture, they were, as Milman says, 'wildly bidding for their lives.' 'It was inevitable,' writes Professor Lodge, 'that a celibate society of warriors should give occasion for the belief that the vow of chastity was not always observed. It is credible that in their intercourse with the Saracens many of the Knights may have been led into unbelief, or even to adopt a contemptuous and irreverent attitude towards Christianity. But it is not credible that the whole Order was guilty of the obscenity, blasphemy, and irreligion charged against it. Confessions extorted under horrible tortures and recanted when health and sanity were restored, do not constitute evidence from which any reasonable conclusions can be drawn.'[2] When Dante charges Philip

[1] The variant *nuovi ladroni* (new thieves) misses the very point of Dante's contrast, which is that they are living (*vivi*) to enjoy their villany.

[2] *The Close of the Middle Ages*, p. 55.

with having suppressed the Order 'without decree,' he means something more definite than the absence of fair trial. In point of fact, Clement v. did issue a decree for its suppression, the Bull *Vox in excelso*, dated March 22, 1312. But from Dante's point of view Clement was not the rightful Pope, and therefore had no authority to issue decrees: in doing so, he was simply the tool of Philip's avarice, the wind that bore 'his greedy sails into the Temple.'[1] The true reason for the suppression was the King's determination to fill his coffers with the Templars' wealth. 'The King,' writes Villani (viii. 92), 'was moved by his avarice, and made secret arrangements with the Pope and caused him to promise to destroy the Order of the Templars, laying to their charge many articles of heresy; but it is said that it was more in hope of extracting great sums of money from them, and by reason of offence taken against the master of the Temple and the Order. The Pope, to be rid of the King of France, by reason of the request which he had made, that he would condemn Pope Boniface, as we have said before, whether rightly or wrongly, to please the King promised that he would do this.'[2] The case dragged on from 1307 to 1314, when Jacques du Molay, the Master of the Order, was publicly burnt alive in the presence of the King. So nobly did he bear

[1] Compare Canto xxxiii. 34, 35, where Beatrice declares that the Church 'was, and is not.' In calling Philip 'the new Pilate,' Dante would remind us that the old Pilate also acted 'without decree.' For the Bull suppressing the Order, see Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, vi. 96 n. (English Translation).

[2] The allusion to 'secret arrangements' refers to the six conditions imposed by Philip on Clement before he had him elected Pope: (1) The annulling of the sentence of excommunication passed on him by Boniface. (2) The absolution of Nogaret and all others concerned in the outrage at Anagni. (3) A tithe of their incomes to be paid to Philip by the clergy for five years. (4) The condemnation of the memory of Boniface. (5) The restoration of the two Colonna as excommunicated by Boniface to their estates and their rank as cardinals. (6) A secret condition to be disclosed in its due time and place. This is generally believed to have been the suppression of the Templars. Clement tried to escape from destroying the Order, but Philip held him to it by the threat of making him fulfil the fourth condition. The Templars were flung to the wolves in order to save the memory of Boniface from dishonour. See Villani, viii. 80, 92; Milman, *Latin Christianity*, Bk. xii.; Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, Bk. xi. chap. ii.

himself that the popular imagination transfigured him into a martyr. The story rose that out of the flames the old man summoned Pope and King to meet him within forty days before the throne of the Most High. Its origin was probably the fact that both Clement and Philip died in the following year,—the latter at the early age of forty-six. The absence of any reference to their deaths in the passage before us may be taken as proof that it was written prior to 1314. Dante puts a prayer for vengeance into the mouth of Hugh Capet; and if Pope and King had been already dead, he would certainly, as in other cases, have thrown it into the form of a prophecy of the impending judgment of Heaven upon their almost unparalleled wickedness.[1]

[1] This is undoubtedly how their deaths were regarded by the world in general. See Villani's *Chronicle*, ix. 59, 66.

CHAPTER XIX

Terrace V—Avarice

3. *Statius and the Earthquake*

We have now reached a point at which some new guidance becomes necessary, to supplement that of Virgil, and it is introduced with a startling and dramatic suddenness which sends a chill as of death through the poet's heart. The two Pilgrims had just parted with Hugh Capet when a violent earthquake shook the Mountain, and a great cry went up on every side of '*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*' They stood in suspense, 'like the shepherds who first heard that song' until the trembling ceased, and the cry with it. The penitents resumed their wailing and the poets their journey—Dante consumed with thirst to understand what it all meant. And then suddenly they are startled by a voice from behind: 'My brothers, God give you peace.' It was a risen soul, that appeared to them even as the risen Christ appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus.[1] Virgil returns his greeting, and after explaining that he himself is bound in 'the eternal exile,' while Dante's brow shows that he 'must reign with the good,' begs him to tell them the meaning of the earthquake, and of the cry that rang to the Mountain's very base.

In reply, the risen spirit, who, as we shall see, is the Roman poet Statius, gives them a long and very peculiar explanation of the phenomenon. In the first place, the earthquake is not a sign of disorder here, as it is down below, for 'the religion of the Mount,' its sacred rule, feels nothing outside of order and custom.

[1] Luke xxiv. 15.

> 'Free is it here from every permutation;
> That which Heaven from itself into itself receiveth
> Can be the cause of it, and naught beside.'[1]

Statius proceeds to explain why this region is beyond change. The variations of weather of the earth reach no higher than St. Peter's Gate. A distinction from Aristotle seems to be drawn between *humid* vapour and *dry*. Humid vapour consists of rain, hail, snow, dew, hoar-frost; and these fall no higher than 'the short little stairway of the three steps.' The dry vapour produces clouds, lightning, and wind; and these, being lighter, may rise apparently a little higher—to the *top* of the little stairway, 'where the vicar of Peter hath his feet.' Below this topmost step the Mount may tremble more or less by reason of the wind hidden in the bowels of the earth, which was regarded as the cause of earthquakes.[2]

At first glance, it seems perhaps a mere useless piece of ingenuity to find in this any moral significance; yet one has really no alternative. Nothing on the Mount is 'without order'; and the cessation of changes of weather at a certain point in the ascent must be an allegory of something. It represents the point at which the fluctuations and storms of temptation fall away from the penitent soul. We have already seen that the spirits immediately inside the Gate are free from the temptations of sin.[3] We have also seen that the region of the lower sky is under the dominion of 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' The demon that waited to seize the soul of Buonconte, enraged at being disappointed of his prey, moved the mist and wind, covered the valley with clouds, and swept the country with a wild tempest of rain. In the Inferno the Sensual are driven on by an eternal whirlwind, and the Gluttonous are beaten by heavy rain, hail, and snow which never cease. When Dante reaches the Earthly Paradise, Matelda tells him it is

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 43-45. [2] Aristotle, *Meteor.* I. iii; II. iv, viii, ix.
[3] *Purg.* xi. 19-24. See pp. 115-119; 174.

given by God as 'an earnest of eternal peace.' It rises above all storms of the sinful world below. 'The sweet breeze' which moved 'the divine forest' was caused by no earthly change, but by 'the primal turning' of the Heavens which swept the atmospheric envelope from east to west. Similarly the rivers of Lethe and Eunoë, unlike those of earth, were fed by no 'vapour that the cold converts,' but by a fountain continually replenished by the will of God. It is the peaceful garden of Eden before sin had made necessary 'the useful trouble of the rain.' It is no mere fancy, therefore, to see in those disturbances of weather which cannot rise above the Gate of St. Peter, the symbol of those stormy fluctuations of temptation which, by God's grace, are powerless to disturb and agitate the life of true penitence and prayer.[1]

If, then, the earthquake was not caused by temptations of the sinful world below, it must have been produced by the attraction of the pure world above—'that which Heaven from itself into itself receiveth,' words which must be interpreted by the explanation of them given by Statius. Heaven receives into itself only the pure—'there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie.'[2] It is the pure soul, then, which came from Heaven and returns to it, that shakes the Mountain:

'It trembles here, whenever any soul
Feels itself pure, so that it rise, or that it move
To mount aloft, and such a cry doth speed it.
Of the purity the will alone makes proof,
Which, being wholly free to change its convent,
The soul surprises, and with will doth aid it.
At first it wills well; but the desire suffers it not,
Which Divine justice, over against the will,
Sets towards the torment, as 'twas once towards the sin.

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 88 ff. See pp. 383-386. In Gen. ii. 6, instead of the 'mist' of the English version, in the Vulgate the Garden is watered by a fountain: 'fons ascendebat e terra, irrigans universam superficiem terræ.' This fountain is contrasted with the rain of v. 5. There can be little doubt that this is why Dante represents Lethe and Eunoë as flowing from one fountain (*Purg.* xxxiii. 112-114). Symbolically they are the peace of Paradise Regained, in contrast to the rain and wind and storm of human sin and passion.

[2] Rev. xxi. 27 (R.V.).

And I who have been lying in this grief
Five hundred years and more, but just now felt
A free will for a better threshold.
Therefore thou didst feel the earthquake, and didst hear
The pious spirits through the Mountain render praise
To that Lord, by whom soon be they upward led.'[1]

The meaning is that it is the purity of the soul that shakes the Mountain. The only proof of this purity having come to the soul is simply the will to depart. Not that this will to depart is not always there, for the will seeks to reach God; but the will (*voler*) is held in check by a desire (*talento*), which sets as strongly now in the direction of the penalty of sin, as it did on earth towards the sin itself. 'The distinction here intended between *voler* and *talento* is a familiar one, though the terms used may vary. Thus, in sickness we will or wish for (*voler*) health as an end, but our present and immediate desire (*talento*) is for the remedial means, painful though they may be, which we know to be necessary before that end can be realized. Similarly, the penitent soul has always in one sense "a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord," but as it knows this to be impossible, except on condition of first undergoing the purifying pain, its present desire (called by Aquinas *voluntas conditionata*) is to welcome that remedial pain. When at last the soul is conscious that it is entirely pure and free, and that no barrier any longer stands between itself and God, then it gives itself, as it were, the signal for its own release.'[2] The perfect union of desire and will in Love is the final blessedness of the highest Heaven, as in the closing words of the *Paradiso*:

Already my desire and will were turned,
Even as a wheel that equally is moved,
By the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.[3]

The question still remains, however, why the purification of a soul should have this particular effect of shaking the Mountain. We shall not quite understand

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 58-72.

[2] Moore's *Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, p. 50; *Summa* iii. *Suppl.* App. q. ii. a. 2. The idea is that of Newman's *Gerontius*. *Talento*, as Butler says, has 'its original meaning of a weight in the balance,' hence an impulse or desire.

[3] *Par.* xxxiii. 143-145.

until we remember that, just as Mount Purgatory and Mount Calvary are the exact antipodes of each other, so also are the two earthquakes that shook them. The earthquake of the Crucifixion represents the jar and dislocation which the shock of human sin sends through the framework and fabric of the earth. As such, it passes down through the world of the lost directly under Calvary, and breaks into ruins, cliffs and bridges.[1] The earthquake here, on the other hand, represents purification from sin—the thrill and quiver, as it were, that earth gives when a soul is pure enough to escape out of its power.

It is not by accident that the earthquake which recalls the Crucifixion of Christ is joined with the song which announced His birth to the shepherds: '*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*' In this way Dante links together the birth and the death, the Incarnation and the Atonement, and indicates that these form the foundation on which redemption rests, the Divine power which lies behind and beneath all man's efforts to purify himself. It is for the same reason that a reference is made to the Resurrection of our Lord—Statius appearing to the two travellers as the risen Christ did to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. It is not a mere comparison; there is a mystical spiritual link between the two events. Statius has died with Christ unto sin, and now he rises with Him, by 'the power of His resurrection,' 'according to the spirit of holiness.'[2] This mystical parallelism with Christ's death and resurrection would probably have completed itself in the direct ascension of Statius to Paradise, had he not, as Dante hints, lingered somewhat in order to act as guide to himself and Virgil.[3] It is sometimes thought that the *Purgatorio* is nothing more than a picture of the human soul saving itself by its own works, and purifying itself by an ascetic system of penitential discipline; but in the present passage Dante wishes to indicate that the process of purification is

[1] *Inf.* xii. 34-45; xxi. 106-114.
[2] Phil. iii. 10; Rom. i. 4.
[3] *Purg.* xxiv. 8, 9.

completed only in virtue of the Divine victory over sin which was accomplished in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Virgil expresses himself as satisfied with this explanation of the earthquake and the cry which accompanies it; but begs Statius—whose name he does not yet know—to tell him who he was on earth, and why he has been lying on this Terrace more than five hundred years. Then follows a long conversation between the two Latin poets by means of which Dante constructs an 'ideal biography' of Statius, obviously for the purpose of glorifying Virgil, partly as poet, and partly in his symbolic character of Reason. It is, in short, the point in the pilgrimage at which Virgil's guidance begins to fail and to need a higher illumination; and Statius represents the way in which that higher illumination springs from Virgil himself. The truth seems to be that while Dante accepts the familiar mediæval distinction between Faith and Reason, and makes the best of it, he has an instinctive feeling that some higher unity transcends it. Virgil as Reason is but the servant of Beatrice, the symbol of Divine Wisdom, and leads to her. The same idea emerges in this passage. Statius represents in some sense the higher wisdom of Christian Faith, but it is Virgil who leads him to that higher wisdom. In other words, Reason implies Faith and Faith Reason: Virgil has at least one deep flash of prophetic insight into the New Era. It is to bring out this inherent and essential unity of the two that Dante represents him as being the true author of the faith of his brother-poet.

The account which Statius gives of himself is a purely imaginative reconstruction of his life. It is, indeed, not easy to account for the position Dante here assigns him, except on the supposition that his admiration of Virgil atones for everything. In point of fact, Statius was, as Professor Tyrrell says, 'poet-laureate to the aristocracy. The loss of a wife, a dog, a parrot, found in him a ready chronicler; orders were executed with punctuality and despatch; and the building of a

palace was not a theme too high for him, or the purchase of a turbot too low. Statius was of course a flatterer, not only of the emperor but of his favourites, freedmen and sons of freedmen, for whom he invented pedigrees. He had the alternative of kissing the emperor's feet, like Martial, or of sharing the fate of Lucan and Seneca.'[1] We know which he chose. He covered with the most fulsome adulation that same Domitian whom he here accuses of persecuting the Christians.[2] It is difficult to understand Dante's obvious admiration of him as a poet. Professor Tyrrell characterizes his mythology as 'frigid,' and says that 'the commonplaces of rhetoric are the Alpha and Omega of his art.' The explanation seems to be that Statius, like Dante himself, took Virgil as his master in poetry. His *Thebaid* was modelled on the *Æneid*; and to it and the *Achilleid* Dante was indebted for a large number of his references to the legends of Greek mythology.[3]

Let us now follow the story of his life which Dante puts into the lips of Statius. Various dates of his birth are given—according to some about A.D. 40, while others put it twenty-five years later. Dante evidently took the earlier date, for Statius says he was at the height of his poetic fame when 'the good Titus'

> 'avenged the wounds
> Whence issued the blood by Judas sold,'—[4]

that is, A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed. In saying that the sweetness of his poetic voice drew him from his native city of Toulouse to Rome, Dante made the common mediæval mistake of confounding the poet with the contemporary Toulousian rhetorician, Lucius Statius.[5] In reality he was born in Naples; and

[1] *Latin Poetry*, p. 284. [2] *Purg.* xxii. 83.

[3] See Moore's *Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 30 ff. and p. 243 ff.

[4] *Purg.* xxi. 82-84. The Crucifixion is referred to in this form in order to connect the treachery of Judas with this Terrace of Avarice. The sale of 'the innocent blood' was the crowning example of this sin.

[5] Chaucer, *e.g.*, makes the same mistake in *The Hous of Fame*, iii. 370-373:

> The Tholosan that highte Stace,
> That bar of Thebes up the name
> Upon his shuldres, and the fame
> Also of cruel Achillés.

his retirement from Rome to his native city is perhaps hinted at in the statement that he *deserved* to have his brows adorned with the myrtle crown, the suggestion seeming to be that he had not received his deserts.[1] 'From his boyhood he was victorious in poetic contests, —many times at his native city Naples, thrice at Alba, where he received the golden crown from the hand of the emperor. But at the great Capitoline competition (probably on its third celebration in 94 A.D.) Statius failed to win the coveted chaplet of oak leaves. No doubt the extraordinary popularity of his *Thebais* had led him to regard himself as the supreme poet of the age, and when he could not sustain this reputation in the face of rivals from all parts of the empire he accepted the judges' verdict as a sign that his day was past, and retired to Naples, the home of his ancestors and of his own young days.'[2] After referring to his *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*—the latter of which remains a fragment owing to his early death—he acknowledges his debt to the *Æneid*, 'the divine flame' which had kindled more than a thousand poets. With warmest gratitude he admits that without it his fame would not have balanced the weight of a drachm, and declares that to have lived on earth while Virgil was alive he would endure another year of exile from Paradise. Whereupon there follows a merry little bit of by-play which shows that human nature is not greatly changed in the world of shades. Virgil gives Dante a look which 'by silence said "Be silent"'; but Dante, being a poor dissembler, cannot restrain a momentary 'flash of laughter.' Statius asks what it means, evidently uncertain whether the joke is not at his expense. Dante has no option but to explain the true reason:

> 'This one, who guides on high these eyes of mine,
> Is that Virgilius, from whom thou didst draw
> Power to sing of men and of the gods.'[3]

What follows is not easy to understand. Statius stoops to embrace Virgil's feet, but is forbidden:

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 90.
[2] Art. 'Statius,' *Encycl. Brit.* (Tenth Ed.).
[3] *Purg.* xxi. 124-126.

'Brother, do not so, for thou art a shade and a shade thou seest'; and he, rising, apologizes for his folly: it was the very warmth of his love that made him forget their 'emptiness,' and deal with shades as with 'solid things.' The difficulty is that Virgil allowed Sordello to embrace him twice, and once at least returned his embrace.[1] The solution of the apparent inconsistency can scarcely lie in the mere fact that Statius is a shade, for this is equally true of Sordello. One ventures to suggest that the reason may be found in the moral discipline through which the Pilgrims have passed in the interval. It was in admiration of his poetic genius that Statius stooped at Virgil's feet; but since the time when Sordello offered the same homage, Virgil has passed through the Terrace of Pride and has there learned the 'emptiness'—*vanitate*—of poetic fame, the 'vainglory of the human powers.'[2] It is not merely as men they have become shades; even as poets the other world has changed them into insubstantial things. This may be the reason why Virgil gave Dante the sign of silence,—in his new humility he was content to remain unknown. On earth, indeed, 'poet' may be, as Statius says, 'the name which most endures and honours most'; but in the world of eternal realities it has become a shadow. Whether this solution is accepted or not, it is quite impossible to believe that Dante was guilty of an oversight. He simply cannot have forgotten that what is here forbidden to Statius was allowed to Sordello; and the most natural thing is to suppose that the contrast is intentional, and is meant to convey some definite piece of moral symbolism.[3]

It is somewhere about this point that the three Pilgrims must have met the Angel of the Terrace, although, strange to say, there is no mention of the encounter until it is past, nor is there any description of the Angel, as on most of the other Cornices. Dante

[1] *Purg.* vi. 75; vii. 15. [2] *Purg.* xi. 82-108.

[3] Casella (Canto ii. 76-84) is not in point, since it is an attempt of one still in the flesh to embrace a bodiless shade.

seems not to have seen him at all; he was conscious only of his turning them into the passage which led up to the Sixth Terrace, and of his erasing the fifth P from his brow. This cannot be accidental, and the reason seems to depend on what the Angel represents. From the Beatitude with which he greets the travellers, we may assume that he is the Angel of Justice:

> And those who have to justice their desire
> He had said to us are *Beati*, and his words
> With *sitiunt*, without the rest, set this forth.[1]

In the Vulgate the full Beatitude is: '*Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam.*' 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness' or justice. Dante breaks this up into two Beatitudes—the *thirst* for justice relating to this Terrace of Avarice, and the *hunger* to the Terrace of Gluttony immediately above. The Beatitude here, therefore, is, 'Blessed are they who thirst for justice'—the thirst for justice standing in opposition to the thirst for gold. The Angel, then, represents Justice; and Justice is defined by Aquinas as 'a habit, whereby with a standing and abiding will one gives every one his due.' Properly speaking, however, Justice as thus defined is not the exact opposite of Avarice, which is 'an immoderate love of having.' It is quite conceivable that a man may be strictly just in the payment of his legal debts, and yet be a slave to the love of money, nay, may even pursue honesty as the best policy, the surest, safest mode of gratifying that love. Hence Aquinas sees that something over and above justice is necessary to moderate the 'interior affections' in relation to riches; and this something is liberality. For this reason when he discusses avarice and prodigality, it is as vices opposed not to justice but to liberality, though he admits that there is an intimate agreement between the two.[2] It comes nearer Dante's purpose,

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 4-6; Matt. v. 6.

[2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. lviii. a. 1; cxvii. 5; cxviii. 3. 'Liberality,' says Aquinas, 'is not a species of justice: because justice renders to another what is his, but liberality gives him what is the giver's own. Still it has a certain agreement with justice on two points: first, that it is *to another*, as justice also is; secondly, that it is about exterior things, like justice,

then, to say that the Angel represents Liberality, the Aristotelian mean between Prodigality and Avarice.[1] This would account too for the curiously incidental way in which he is named by Dante. No account is given of the meeting with him, or of his appearance. He is not even mentioned until he has been left behind. Liberality is a modest virtue which does nothing to be seen of men; it obeys the command, 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'[2]

With the wiping away of the P of Covetousness from his brow, Dante tells us he found himself 'more light than through the other passes.' He regards the love of money as one of the heaviest of all the burdens of sin: it keeps its victims in the Fourth Circle of the Inferno rolling great weights 'by main-force of chest'; it holds these penitents prostrate on the dust to which their souls cleave; and some forms of it, such as Simony, bury men alive in the hard rock of their own pitiless hearts. None of the P's erased from his brow on the other Terraces—not even that of Pride—gave him the same sense of lightness, of emancipation from the burden and bondage of the world.

Meantime the conversation between the two Latin poets proceeds as they climb up the passage to the Sixth Cornice.[3] Virgil cannot understand how a wise man like Statius, and one who had so diligently cultivated wisdom, could have become the victim of so low a vice as avarice, and begs him to tell him how it came about. The question moves Statius to laughter for a moment, and he then explains that his sin had been prodigality, 'the direct opposite' of avarice. Moreover, it was Virgil himself who had taught

though in another way. And therefore liberality is laid down by some to be a part of justice, as a virtue annexed to justice as its primary.'

[1] *Ethics*, iv. 1-3.

[2] Matt. vi. 3. In *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxxxii. a. 5, ostentation in almsgiving is condemned as lacking in charity, since it is the preferring of a man's own vainglory to the good of his neighbour.

[3] Virgil tells Statius that even in Limbo he had heard from Juvenal of his love of him. Juvenal was a contemporary of Statius whom he praises in Satire vii. Dante refers to him in *Conv.* iv. 12 as one who denounced 'the deceitfulness of riches.'

him what he did not know before—that prodigality is a sin:

'Now know thou that avarice was parted
Too far from me, and this disproportion
Thousands of moons have punished.
And were it not that I set straight my care,
When I understood the passage where thou criest,
Enraged as it were 'gainst human nature:
"By what dost thou not sway, O cursed hunger
Of gold, the appetite of mortal men?"—
At the rolling I should feel the woeful jousts.
Then I perceived the hands could spread too wide
Their wings in spending, and repented me
As well of that as of my other sins;
How many shall rise again with the hair shorn,
Because of ignorance, which from this sin cuts off
Repentance during life, and in the latest hour!'[1]

In other words, multitudes who recognize avarice as a deadly sin, never suspect that prodigality is the other extreme of the self-same vice, both being love of money—the one to hoard, the other to spend. The reason of this ignorance is, as Aristotle says, that prodigality, being an excess of *giving*, is akin to liberality, and frequently believes itself to be that virtue. Its very open-handedness gives it a look of generosity which conceals its inherent meanness and evil. 'Most prodigals,' writes Aristotle, 'not only give to the wrong people, but take from the wrong sources, and are so far illiberal. They become grasping because they are eager to spend, and are not able to do so easily, as their means soon run short; they are therefore obliged to get their means from other sources. At the same time, as nobleness is a matter of indifference to them, they are reckless and indiscriminate in their taking; for they are eager to give but do not care at all how they give, or how they get the means of giving.'[2] Ignorant

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 34-48. 'The woeful jousts' of l. 42 refers to the clashing of the Prodigals and Misers in *Inf.* vii. 22-35.

[2] *Ethics*, iv. 3 (Welldon). Comp. *Conv.* iv. 27: 'Ah ye ill-starred and ill-born, who disinherit widows and wards, who snatch from the most helpless, who rob and seize the rights of others, and therefrom prepare feasts, make gifts of horses and arms, robes and money, wear gorgeous apparel, build marvellous edifices, and believe yourselves to be doing generously! And what else is this than to take the cloth from the altar and cover therewith the robber and his table?' (Wicksteed's Translation.)

of this inherent sinfulness, many prodigals live and die without repentance, and will therefore rise, says Statius, 'with the hair shorn,' in reference to the Italian proverb which describes a spendthrift as one who 'squanders to his very hair.' In the Resurrection even their bodies will bear the marks of their prodigal career.

It is this ignorance of the sinfulness of Prodigality which gives the key to the sense in which Statius quotes Virgil's famous apostrophe to 'auri sacra fames,' over which so much controversy has raged. To justify the translation given above, and to bring out what we regard as the true sense, it is necessary to examine the passage with some care.

(1) The lines to which Statius refers are *Æneid*, iii. 56, 57:

> 'Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
> Auri sacra fames?'[1]

'To what dost thou not drive the hearts of mortals, accursed hunger of gold?' There can be little doubt that '*sacra*' means 'accursed,' and not 'sacred,' as Dryden, for example, translates it. If ever this hunger was accursed, it was when it drove to the crime which wrung the cry from Æneas. The infamy of Polymnestor, who murdered young Polydorus his guest for the sake of his treasure, encircles the Mount on the Terrace of Avarice. It is, therefore, most improbable that Dante completely reverses what he must have known perfectly to be the Virgilian sense.

(2) This decides the rejection of a common translation of Dante's rendering: 'Why restrainest thou not, O holy hunger of gold, the desire of mortals?'—based partly on the ambiguity of the word *sacra*, and partly on his substitution of the word *reggi* for *cogis*. The idea of this translation is that the hunger for gold, being a natural human appetite, is holy, if held within due bounds. If Dante really thought this was the meaning of Virgil's words, there are three ways in which we can account for it. First, by sheer ignorance;

[1] Dante's version, according to the Oxford edition, is as follows:—

> 'Per che non reggi tu, o sacra fame
> Dell' oro, l'appetito dei mortali?'

and whoever can believe that Dante did not understand an ordinary piece of Latin like this, is capable of believing anything. It would certainly constitute, as Dr. Oelsner says, 'a more portentous blunder in Latinity than any other that can be brought home to him.' The second possibility is more likely—that he quoted from memory, and that his memory misled him. There is a third, however, which fits in much more naturally with all we know of the working of his mind, namely, that 'Dante, while understanding the sense in which Virgil uttered the words, considered himself justified in supposing that his writings, like the Scripture, had many senses, and that for purposes of edification we must look at all the possible meanings that any passage might have apart from the context in which it occurs.'[1]

(3) On this supposition, what is the special meaning which he finds here in Virgil's words, as a legitimate extension and application of their original sense? The answer is surely to be sought in the discovery which Statius found in them of the sinfulness of prodigality. He knew that the 'accursed hunger of gold' drove men to crime *by means of avarice*; but he did not know that the same evil hunger swayed the appetite of men equally *by means of prodigality*. It came on him as a sudden revelation that this hunger of gold can approach by the most opposite avenues, can rule over us through the most diverse passions. To paraphrase the passage as given by Dante: 'By means of what art thou not able to rule human hearts? Thou canst do it by avarice, the passion for hoarding; not less canst thou do it by its opposite, prodigality, the passion for spending. By what canst thou *not* do it? What instrument is there thou canst not use to sway the appetite of mortal men?' This interpretation has at least the merit of flowing out of the great discovery which Statius says he found in the words, of the sinfulness of his own spendthrift life. The interpretation preferred by Scartazzini and others: 'Through what crooked ways,

[1] *Purgatorio*, Temple Classics, p. 280.

through what wickedness, dost thou not lead and guide, O accursed hunger of gold, the appetite of men?' —is too vague and general. It has nothing specially to do with the case in point: Statius knew already that this hunger drove the avaricious man through 'crooked ways' of wickedness; what he had still to learn was that it was the same unholy hunger that swayed his own prodigal soul.[1]

Virgil now proceeds to a second difficulty. None but Christians can purge themselves upon this Mountain: how, then, was Statius here, seeing that at the time when he sang 'the cruel war of the twofold sorrow of Jocasta' in the *Thebaid*, he was still a Pagan? What sun or candles dispelled his heathen darkness, he asks, so that he set his sails behind the Fisherman, that is, St. Peter?[2] The answer shows the hopeless entanglement in which the Church's doctrine of the perdition of the heathen involved the poet's mind, and the pathos of the strange doom by which Virgil, able to 'save others,' as Dr. Moore says, cannot 'save himself.' The passage is important for the understanding of the relations between Faith and Reason, Christianity and Paganism:

> 'Thou first didst put me on the way
> Towards Parnassus, in its caves to drink,
> And then didst light me on the road to God.
> Thou didst as he who walketh in the night,
> Who bears the light behind, and helpeth not himself,

---

[1] This interpretation is based on Dr. Moore's reading *Per che*, instead of *perchè*; *a che*, which Butler accepts, he regards as simply 'an alteration of the text.' Butler's idea that 'Dante understood "sacra fames" in a good sense, equivalent to the "holy poverty" of theologians,' even if true, would have no bearing on the case of Statius. Dr. Moore seems inclined to regard the passage as 'a sort of misquotation by Dante' (*Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 186). It may seem presumptuous to differ from so many Dante scholars of the first rank, but one has little option: the meaning must be sought by putting one's self in the place of Statius, and seeing clearly what discovery of moral truth Virgil's words conveyed to him.

[2] *Purg.* xxii. 55-63. It is curious to find Virgil conversant with the contents of a poem written after his death, even to the opening invocation to Clio, the Muse of History (l. 58). Did he learn of it from Juvenal, who told him in Limbo of the affection which Statius bore him (ll. 13-15)? 'The twofold sorrow of Jocasta' refers to her twin sons, Polynices and Eteocles, possibly with a side glance at their incestuous birth. Their hatred survived death (*Inf.* xxvi. 54).

But maketh wise the persons after him,
When thou didst say: "The world renews itself,
Justice returns, and man's primeval time,
And a new progeny from Heaven descends."
Through thee I poet was, through thee a Christian;
But that thou better see what I outline,
To fill with colour I will stretch the hand.
Already was the world in every part
Pregnant with the true creed, disseminated
By the messengers of the Eternal Kingdom;
And the word of thine, touched on above,
With the new preachers was in harmony,
Whence I to visit them the habit took.
They then came to seem to me so holy,
That, when Domitian persecuted them,
Not without tears of mine were their laments.
And so long as in yonder world I stayed,
Them I befriended, and their upright customs
Made me hold cheap all other sects;
And ere I led the Greeks unto the rivers
Of Thebes, in my poem, had I baptism:
But through fear a hidden Christian was I,
Long time making a show of paganism;
And this lukewarmth made me the fourth circle
Circle round, more than four hundred years.'[1]

There is no record whatever of the conversion of Statius: it is a pure invention, for the purpose, apparently, of showing that Christ is 'the Desire of all nations,'[2] and that the natural heart grows prophetic in its yearning for His advent. The passage quoted is the well-known 'Cumæan song' of the last age:

Magnus ab integro seclôrum nascitur ordo
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto.

The Fourth Eclogue of the *Bucolics* from which these words come, has just that atmosphere of prophetic mystery which would naturally attract a mind like Dante's. 'It is allegorical, mystical, half historical and prophetical, ænigmatical, anything in fact but

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 64-93. The curious reference in ll. 88, 89 to the date of his baptism has undoubtedly some meaning, but it is difficult to say what. It is in the ninth of the twelve books of the *Thebaid* that Statius brings the Greeks to the rivers of Thebes, Ismenus and Asopus. 'His lukewarmness,' says Vernon, 'would be shown by there being no profession of his faith, or praise of the Christian religion, in his three last books.'

[2] Haggai ii. 7.

Bucolic.' From its title *Pollio*, the words quoted above are thought by many to refer to the birth of the son of Virgil's patron, Asinius Pollio, governor of Northern Italy. Others refer them to the birth of Marcellus, son of Octavia, the sister of Augustus, for whose early death Virgil wrote the great dirge in the Sixth of the *Æneid* (860-886). 'The main purpose of the poem, however,' as Professor Sellar says 'is to express, in connexion with pastoral associations, the longing of the world for a new era of peace and happiness, of which the treaty of Brundusium seemed to hold out some definite hopes. . . . The ideas are derived partly from Greek representations of the Golden Age, and partly, it is supposed, from the later Sibylline prophecies, circulated after the burning in the time of Sulla of the old Sibylline books, and possibly tinged with Jewish ideas.'[1] It is for this reason, apparently, that the poem rose naturally to Dante's mind as he drew near the Earthly Paradise, which, as we shall see, he regarded as the fulfilment of poets' dreams of the Golden Age.[2] The words to which Dante refers were too alluring and suggestive to be passed over by the Christian Church. Its apologists seized on them eagerly as a prophecy of the birth of Christ, and Virgil was elevated to the rank of 'a species of Pagan Isaiah.' 'He was placed among the Prophets in the Cathedral of Zamorra, and invoked as Prophet of the Gentiles in Limoges and Rheims. The rubric of Rouen directed that on Christmas Day the priest should say,—

"Maro, Maro, Vates Gentilium
Da Christo testimonium,"

to which Virgilius was to reply,

"Ecce polo demissa solo nova progenies est."'[3]

The beautiful story of the Sibyl appearing to Virgil's patron, the Emperor Augustus, and giving him a vision of the Virgin and Child, as she herself takes her

[1] Art. 'Virgil' in *Encycl. Brit.* (Tenth Ed.).
[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 139-141. See p. 387.
[3] Professor Tyrrell's *Latin Poetry*, p. 156.

departure from the world, may be regarded as this Virgilian passage turned by the pious imagination of the Church into pictorial legendary form.[1] Dante's chief interest in the words is that they link together the old world and the new, forming what he regarded as a natural point of transition from Paganism to Christianity.

In short, Virgil is the Pagan John the Baptist, and, like his fellow-herald, 'the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' For undoubtedly Statius is a lesser soul, yet Virgil is pictured as a mere servant walking at night in front of him, and holding a lamp behind to guide his master's footsteps, while he himself remains in the darkness. Dante must surely have felt the strange anomaly which this involves. It is not as if the Christianity of Statius were of a high and noble quality; on the contrary, it was lukewarm and cowardly. True, he befriended the Christians, and sympathized with them even to tears in their persecutions; but he refused to share their sufferings, and remained a 'hidden Christian,' 'making a show of Paganism.' For this cowardly shrinking from 'witnessing a good confession,' he has to pay by a penance of full four hundred years on the Terrace of Sloth.[2] It is far from being a noble type of Christian character; and while, indeed, Dante intends the passage to show the superiority of the Christian faith, it is surely more than questionable whether it is really honoured when a man such as Dante conceived Virgil to be, is made a mere servant to light a coward soul to Paradise, only to be himself swept down to darkness and the Limbo of Hell. Dante's tears when he found his 'sweetest Father' vanished from his side, prove that he never quite reconciled himself to the perdition of virtuous heathen: as a faithful son of the Church he might accept it, but he felt that it violated some instinct of both love and justice in the human heart.[3]

[1] See Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*, p. 197.

[2] For the importance of confession in Scripture, see Matt. x. 32, 33; Rom. x. 9, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 13.

[3] According to Professor Earle, this conversion of Statius 'was not a

It is difficult to understand how Statius spent about one-fourth of the twelve centuries or so that had elapsed since his death in A.D. 96. If we add this number to the 400 years on the Terrace of Sloth, and the 500 on that of Avarice,[1] we have 996, leaving 304 to make up 1300, the ideal date of the poem. It is generally assumed that those three centuries were spent in Ante-Purgatory; but the question, in what part, is not easy to answer. Indeed, the only possible part seems to be the very base of the Mountain among the Excommunicate. The three remaining classes are ruled out, for their period of detention does not exceed the length of time they postponed repentance on earth. The Excommunicate, on the other hand, are detained thirty times the period of their contumacy. If we imagine that Dante regarded the non-confession of Statius as a species of self-excommunication, the 300 years would be the thirtyfold detention for ten years of contumacy against the Church. The question is not important, but it is unlike Dante to leave matters of either time or space at loose ends; and merely to say that the three centuries unaccounted for were passed in Ante-Purgatory only creates a new difficulty.

The remainder of the ascent is occupied with conversation about certain Latin and Greek poets, and the personages who appear in the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* of Statius. Terence, Cæcilius, Plautus, Varro, Persius, and many others, himself included, says Virgil, are in Limbo with Homer, 'that Greek whom the Muses suckled more than ever another,' where they hold discourse of 'the mountain which had their nurses always with itself.' There too are the Greek poets Euripides and Antiphon, Simonides, Agathon, and many more. Finally, 'the fellow-craftsman's sympathy' makes Virgil tell his brother-poet the doom of 'his

solitary case, but an example of Virgil's influence, and it certainly must be understood to shed a reflex light upon the destiny of Virgil himself.' In other words, having saved others, he must himself be saved (Introduction to Dr. Shadwell's Translation of the *Purgatorio*, Part II. pp. lxi-lxvii). Against this see p. 441.

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 67, 68; xxii. 92, 93. The numbers are only approximate.

people,' the women who moved in tragic sorrow through his pages:

> 'Antigone, Deiphylë and Argia,
> And there Ismene, mournful as of old.
> There is she seen who pointed out Langia;
> There is Tiresias' daughter. and there Thetis,
> And Deidamia with her sisters.'[1]

They have ceased to be mere *dramatis personæ*: the tragedy of earth has swept out into the greater tragedy of the eternal world; yet to Virgil's mind that quiet land where 'only sighs made tremulous the eternal air' may well have seemed a very haven of peace from the wild storms of human sin and passion which beat upon them here.

The introduction of Statius as a supplementary guide to Virgil is one of the most difficult things in the poem. Dr. Moore's suggestion cannot be far from Dante's general purpose: 'If Virgil (as is generally admitted) represents Human Reason, and Beatrice Revelation or Theology, we may perhaps suppose that Statius typifies something intermediate; such as Human Reason, generally enlightened by Christianity, but not specially instructed or interested therein; the cultivated "lay" mind (not even the "pious layman") in an age that has received the general impress of Christianity; a mind by which it is accepted and assumed rather than warmly embraced; one that is unconsciously rather than consciously under its influence. Christianity has, of

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 94-114. Ismene, daughter of Oedipus, is still saddened by the memory of the tragedies through which she passed on earth: 'the violent death of her betrothed, the blinding of her father Oedipus by his own hand, the suicide of her mother Jocasta, the deaths at each other's hands of her brothers Eteocles and Polynices, and the total ruin and downfall of her father's kingdom' (Toynbee). 'She who pointed out Langia' is Hypsipylë. While she was in charge of the son of Lycurgus, King of Nemea, the seven heroes on their way to fight against Thebes asked her where there was a fountain. Leaving the child, she pointed out to them the fountain of Langia; and on returning found the boy dead from the bite of a serpent. Her rescue by her sons from the death to which Lycurgus doomed her, is referred to in Canto xxvi. 94, 95. 'The daughter of Tiresias' is Manto, but it seems impossible to reconcile Virgil's assertion here that she is in Limbo with the fact that she is in the Bolgia of Diviners in the Eighth Circle (*Inf.* xx. 52 ff.). Toynbee calls it 'an unique instance of inaccuracy on Dante's part in a matter of this kind.'

course, lifted the minds, the ideas, the knowledge of mankind to a different level, though they may not be aware of what precisely they owe to it. They breathe a different atmosphere, though they may be unconscious of its ingredients, and unaware of the degree or manner in which it has been changed for the better.'[1] We may perhaps make this view a little more definite if we say that Statius represents something intermediate between Virgil as Reason and Matelda as symbol of the Active Life; for, when the Earthly Paradise is reached, Virgil and Statius retire into the background, and Matelda becomes the guide to Beatrice. Statius, then, may represent a semi-Christianized Philosophy, able indeed to expound the mystery of the human soul in its relation to the natural body of earth and the aerial body of Purgatory, but not yet capable of the positive obedience and service of the Active Life. Doubtless he is chosen for this intermediate office because his warm admiration of Virgil made him an easy point of transition from the virtues of natural Reason to that higher form of them represented by Matelda.

It is perhaps in the light of some such view as this that we are to understand another difficulty, namely, the changes in the order in which the three Pilgrims pursue their journey. This order, as we shall see, passes through three changes. In the first place, up to the point where they enter the fire which burns away Sensuality on the last Terrace, Virgil and Statius walk in front and Dante alone behind (xxii. 127-129). This indicates partly Dante's great reverence for them as his masters in poetry, for he expressly says he 'was listening to their discourse which gave him intellect to sing.' But, since this same order seems to be preserved afterwards when Statius explains the genesis of the natural and the Purgatorial bodies, it is obvious that Dante follows him as the exponent of the Philosophy which forms the transition from the natural world to the spiritual. When they enter the fire which burns out Sensuality, this order is changed, and changed so

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 33.

deliberately, that some symbolism is obviously intended (xxvii. 46-48). Virgil goes in front, and asks Statius to bring up the rear, with Dante between the two. It is far from easy to understand the reason for this order; but one may hazard a conjecture. It was not Dante's Christian faith which led him into the purifying fire, but his reason which urged him again and again to the painful discipline. But while his Christianity cannot lead him into the flame, it can guard him in the rear, and keep him from trying to run away from the torture. Once through the fire, a third change takes place. When Matelda is reached, Dante walks in front and his former guides behind (xxviii. 82; 145, 146). He has entered upon the practical work of the Active Life, a stage of Christian experience surpassing the mere natural Reason of Virgil and the half-Christianized Philosophy of Statius. In short, the changes in the relative positions of the three Pilgrims seem to represent various stages through which Dante passed before his Active Life was fully Christianized.

One final difficulty. It cannot but strike us as strange that, while Reason in the person of Virgil is sufficient to lead Dante through the more spiritual sins of Pride, Envy, Anger, and Sloth, for the sins of the flesh, Avarice, Gluttony, Sensuality, the more distinctively Christian power, represented by Statius, is necessary. This plainly implies that the latter are more difficult to overcome, that Reason requires the aid of a more spiritual strength. If one may conjecture once more, may the solution not lie in the very fact that Avarice, Gluttony, and Sensuality have a certain natural basis in the flesh? They are sins of a natural appetite in excess, and it is this natural element which makes it more difficult for Reason to control them,—it carries them easily beyond the bounds of Reason. Hence perhaps Statius is joined with Virgil, a more spiritual element with the rational, in fulfilment of St. Paul's injunction: 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'[1]

[1] Gal. v. 16.

CHAPTER XX

Terrace VI—Gluttony

1. *The Two Trees*

It was after ten o'clock when the three Pilgrims emerged from the ascent and found themselves on the Sixth Terrace, where the souls of the Gluttonous purged themselves of their special vice. Virgil has no hesitation about the direction now: custom is his guide, and he at once turns to the right, with the greater confidence that Statius assented. The two great Latin poets walk in front discoursing of their art, while Dante follows listening reverently to his Masters' words. Suddenly 'the sweet converse' is interrupted by a tree growing in the midst of the path 'with fruit pleasant and good to smell':

> And even as a fir-tree tapers upward
> From bough to bough, so downwardly did that:
> I think in order that no one up may go.
> On the side on which our path was closed,
> Fell from the high rock a limpid water,
> And spread itself abroad upon the leaves.
> The two poets to the tree drew near,
> And from within the foliage a voice
> Cried: 'Of this food ye shall have scarcity.'[1]

The same voice then proclaimed the great examples of Temperance which form the 'whip' to urge on the penitents of this Terrace in pursuit of that virtue. The first, as usual, is from the Virgin's life: thinking more of the honour of the marriage-feast at Cana than of her own mouth, that mouth gained the power to 'respond' for men

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 133-141.

—prayer and intercession being possible only to the temperate. The heathen parallel to Mary is the ancient Roman women who were content with water for their drink.[1] Then follows an example of abstinence from the Old Testament, Daniel who held food cheap, and thereby gained wisdom, for temperance clears the brain as gluttony clogs and blinds it.[2] The Golden Age is next proclaimed when hunger made acorns savoury, and thirst turned every brook into nectar. And finally, John the Baptist is praised, the herald of the new Golden Age of Christianity, whose simple desert food of 'honey and locusts' made him glorious and great.[3] There is probably a side glance at the luxury of the city of Florence of which he was the patron saint, and a hint that she would never become great and glorious till she gained his virtue of temperate living.

In order to identify, if possible, this first tree, it will be well to examine the other 'plant' which the poets see as they near the end of their journey on the Terrace. Dante describes it thus:

> Appeared to me the boughs laden and living
> Of another apple-tree, and not far distant,
> Since I had but then turned thitherward.
> I saw people beneath it raise their hands,
> And cry I know not what toward the leaves,
> Like little children eager and disappointed,
> Who pray, and he they pray to answers not,
> But to make their wish be very keen
> Holds their desire on high, and hides it not.
> Then they departed, as if undeceived;
> And now we came unto the great tree
> Which so many prayers and tears refuses.
> 'Pass farther onward without drawing nigh;
> The tree is higher up of which Eve ate,
> And out of it this plant was raised.'[4]

This is obviously the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and the reference to Eve is in substance the

[1] According to Aquinas (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxlix. a. 4), 'sobriety is especially required in young men and in women,' because of their proneness to certain sins. 'Hence, according to Valerius Maximus, among the ancient Romans women used not to drink wine.'

[2] Dan. i. 8, 17.

[3] Matt. iii. 4; xi. 11.

[4] *Purg.* xxiv. 103-117.

first of the examples of Intemperance which form the 'bridle' of this Terrace. It stands over against the Virgin's temperance at the marriage-feast,—the great world-wide ruin caused by the indulgence of a natural appetite. The two other examples show the danger of intemperance in wine and in water. The first are the Centaurs:

> 'Be mindful,' said he, 'of the accursed ones
> Formed of the cloud-rack, who, when gorged,
> Fought against Theseus with their double breasts.'[1]

The reference is to the attempt of the Centaurs, when heated with wine at the marriage of their half-brother, Pirithous, King of the Lapithae, to carry off the bride and the other women. Theseus and the Lapithae defeated them after a severe conflict. They are the type in the *Commedia* of violence and riotous excess. 'Their double breasts' refers to their twofold form, half-horse, half-man, with a special allusion in the present connection to the way in which drunkenness turns a man into a brute; while 'formed of the cloud-rack' relates to the treacherous passion of their father Ixion, of which they were the fruit. The next example is from Scripture, and represents the necessity of abstaining at times even from excess in water: Gideon's rejection of the men who 'bowed down upon their knees to drink water' instead of lapping with the hand to the mouth, when he went down against the Midianites. When the very existence of one's country is in danger, abstinence even from things simple and innocent at other times, may form the touchstone of the true patriot.[2]

We are now in a position to examine the two Trees. It seems certain that the second is *not* a mere repetition of the first. It is expressly declared to have been reared from the tree of which Eve ate in the Earthly Paradise above—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and from its leaves are proclaimed examples of Intemperance. This indicates quite clearly its moral symbolism. It represents the habits and appetites of

[1] *Purg.* xxiv. 121-123. [2] Judges vii. 1-7.

intemperance still remaining in these penitents. They know that this forbidden fruit is now beyond their reach for ever; they know too that it can only mock and never satisfy; nevertheless the old longing wakes at intervals as they come round to the Tree, and like eager and disappointed children they stretch their hands toward it, and, when the fit is over, depart as if undeceived. It represents the sore struggle against their own intemperate habits with which all drunkards are only too familiar, and the periodic recurrence of the craving, in spite of their own better judgment. This is why they are compared to children. Aquinas discusses the question whether intemperance is a childish sin, and replies in the affirmative for three reasons: first, appetite, like a child, has no regard to the order of reason; second, like a child left to its own will, it grows headstrong and unruly; and third, it must be brought to reason as a child is, by constraint and resistance. Hence this Tree holds its forbidden fruit beyond the reach of the childish cravings and tears of the penitents as the inevitable discipline of their unregulated appetites, without which they cannot be reduced to the order of reason.[1]

It is natural now to identify the other tree with the Tree of Life which is 'in the midst of the garden,' as this is 'in the midst of the way.'[2] It represents Temperance and the life which Temperance nourishes. Examples of Temperance and its life-giving issues are proclaimed from its foliage. The water which falls from above upon its leaves comes probably from the 'river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.'[3] As such, it carries a divine virtue to quicken hunger and thirst by the very scent of itself and of the fruit: as Forese Donati says:

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxlii. a. 2; Arist. *Ethics*, iii. 15.

[2] *Purg.* xxii. 131; Gen. ii. 9. In Art Temperance is frequently represented by a female figure holding the branch of a tree, as the symbol of life and fruitfulness.

[3] Rev. xxii. 1. The water is sometimes regarded as the overflow of Lethe and Eunöe in the Earthly Paradise, but no hint of this is anywhere given.

'From the eternal counsel
Falls virtue into the water and into the plant
Behind us left, whereby I grow thus thin.
All of this people who lamenting sing,
For following their appetite beyond measure,
In hunger and thirst do here re-sanctify themselves.
Desire to drink and eat enkindles in us
The scent that issues from the fruit, and from the spray
That spreads itself abroad upon the verdure.'[1]

It is difficult to think that by this Dante means literal hunger and thirst. It must be hunger and thirst for what the Tree symbolizes—Temperance, the power to bring the appetite under due control of reason. It may be said that the shape of the Tree and the voice from the foliage: 'Of this fruit ye shall have scarcity,' are against this interpretation: why should the desire for Temperance be refused? The reason, however, seems plain enough. The shape of the two Trees, which is the same, is frequently misunderstood. That of the first is thus described:

And even as a fir-tree tapers upward
From bough to bough, so downwardly did that:
I think in order that no one up may go.[2]

In Botticelli's drawings both Trees are represented as growing upside down—the roots in the air, and the branches actually offering their fruits to the penitents, thus rendering meaningless what is said of their inaccessibility. In reality Dante's meaning is that their roots are in the ground, but that their branches grow the reverse way of a fir-tree's—the short weak ones beneath, and the strong spreading ones above, so that climbing is impossible. This inaccessibility and the voice: 'Of this fruit ye shall have scarcity,' cannot mean that Temperance, which this Tree symbolizes, is never to be theirs. That they may win it is the very purpose of their presence on this Terrace. But they cannot win it in a moment: so long as the other Tree of Intemperance has power to make them cry like children for forbidden fruit, it is obvious that of this fruit, namely Temperance, they

[1] *Purg.* xxiii. 61-69. [2] *Purg.* xxii. 133-135.

must have scarcity. In other words, the two Trees have the closest moral relation to one another: the circling of the penitents between the two represents the alternate waves of craving for the old gratifications and for that temperance which would lift them above their power; and obviously the latter can be gained only in proportion as the former shrinks. It is to be noted, however, that 'the Cherubim and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life,' are here absent.[1] The penitents are hindered from eating of *this* Tree of Life by nothing but their own longing for the fruit of the other Tree. Once that is conquered, there will be no scarcity of this fruit, according to the promise of Scripture: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'[2]

We come now to the description of the penitent souls. When Dante heard the voice speaking out of the Tree of Temperance, he stood so long gazing into the leaves, like him 'who loses his life after the little birds,' that Virgil has to call him away to a more profitable use of his time. The censure of fowling is somewhat puzzling, and has been thought to refer to this sin of Gluttony—the destruction of small birds, such as larks and nightingales, to gratify the palate of the gourmand. In mediæval religious paintings falconry is regarded as a losing of life, a nobleman with a hawk on hand being introduced as one type of worldliness.[3] Probably, however, what Dante is really censured for is the wasting of his time in a vain curiosity which was akin to that which led Eve to the first sin. She, as he says afterwards, 'endured not to remain under any veil,' that is, her curiosity to know good and evil tore away the veil with which her innocence concealed them. Curiosity, which may be regarded as an intemperance of the mind, is held by Aquinas to be a vice when, as in the case of Dante here, it draws aside

[1] Gen. iii. 24 (R.V.) [2] Rev. ii. 7 (R.V.)

[3] Compare the hunting party in the *Triumph of Death* of the Campo Santo of Pisa.

from some duty, and pries into some truth beyond human ken.[1]

As Dante follows his guides listening to their discourse, a mournful song strikes on his ears: '*Labia mea Domine*,' rousing joy and grief—a mingled feeling to which, as we shall see, he calls special attention on this Terrace. The words of the Chant are from the *Miserere*, Psalm li. 15: 'O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise,' a Psalm which, as Vernon points out, 'forms part of the services of *Lauds* for Tuesdays, and it is on Easter Tuesday that the present scene is supposed to be taking place.' The obvious contrast is between the mouths once opened by themselves, and only for gluttony and its roystering songs, now opened by God for the showing forth of His praise. This contrast with their former life is carried out in several particulars which it is easy to miss. The crowd of penitents who now overtake the three poets are compared to a procession of 'thoughtful pilgrims'—thoughtfulness being one of the last things you expect of men whose minds, as Spenser says, were once drowned in meat and drink. In contrast to their old laziness, they are now so eager and alert that they content themselves with a glance at the strangers over their shoulders, and pass on rapidly without a pause. Finally, they are 'silent and devout,' in contrast to their former *much talking* and *buffoonery*, that immoderation in word and action which Aquinas names among the five 'daughters of gluttony.'[2] In

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxvii. a. 1; Gen. iii. 6; *Purg.* xxix. 26, 27. Aquinas regards studiousness as 'a potential part of temperance,' since the natural desire for knowledge must be restrained so as not to push investigation beyond the bounds of moderation. 'Curiosity' is an inordinate appetite for knowledge, which may show itself in four ways: (1) by withdrawing us from duty; (2) by seeking knowledge from an unlawful source; (3) by neglecting the due end, which is the knowledge of God; (4) by seaching into things too high for us. Compare Raphael's warning to Adam (*Par. Lost*, vii. 126-130):

> 'But Knowledge is as food, and needs no less
> Her temperance over appetite, to know
> In measure what the mind may well contain;
> Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
> Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.'

[2] According to Aquinas the species of gluttony are 'distinguished

these various directions they are unlearning the evil habits which their intemperance has bred in them.

Dante is startled by the fearful emaciation of the crowd. It is a procession of skeletons, as if the famine-worn 'people who lost Jerusalem' were marching past.[1]

> Their eye-sockets seemed rings without the gems;
> He who in the face of man reads *omo*
> Might plainly there have recognized the *m*.[2]

The allusion is to a fancy of mediæval theologians that God had written the words *Homo Dei* on the 'human face divine,' in token that man is created in His image, in some such fashion as this: . Longfellow gives the following extract from a sermon by Brother Berthold, a Franciscan monk of Regensburg, in the thirteenth century: 'The two eyes are two *o*'s. The *h* is properly no letter; it only helps the others; so that *homo* with an *h* means Man. Likewise the brows arched above and the nose down between them are an *m*, beautiful with three strokes. So is the ear a *d*, beautifully rounded and ornamented. So are the nostrils beautifully formed like a Greek ϵ, beautifully rounded and ornamented. So is the mouth an *i*, beautifully adorned and ornamented. Now behold, ye good Christian people, how skilfully he has adorned you with these six letters, to show that ye are his own, and that he has created you! Now read me an *o* and an *m* and another *o* together; that spells *homo*. Then read me a *d* and an *e* and an *i* together; that spells *dei*. *Homo dei*, man of God, man of God!' If Dante is thinking of this particular fancy, the suggestion is that the sin of gluttony has terribly marred the Divine image: only the *m* is visible, and it will be long before the likeness

according to these five conditions: too soon, too expensively, too much, too eagerly, too daintily'; and the five 'daughters of gluttony' are: 'inept mirth, buffoonery, uncleanness, much talking, and dulness of mind for intellectual things' (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxlviii. a. 4, 6).

[1] Two examples of the horrors of famine are given: Erysicthon who for cutting down trees sacred to Ceres was reduced to eating his own flesh (Ovid, *Metam.* viii. 738 ff.), and a Jewess called Mary, who during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus devoured her own child (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, vi. 3). *Purg.* xxii. 25-30.

[2] *Purg.* xxiii. 31-33.

is restored. To add to the horror, the fasting has produced a scaly eruption on the skin, which greatly increases the disfigurement. Dante is amazed to think that the mere scent of fruit and of water could, by the craving it begets, produce such an extremity of emaciation.

His wonder is cut short by one of the souls fixing his cavernous eyes upon him with the cry: 'What grace to me is this?'—and begging him not to turn away from his scurf-disfigured face without giving him news of himself and his companions. But for the voice, Dante would never have recognized in that deformed countenance his old friend, Forese Donati, kinsman of his wife Gemma, and brother of that Corso Donati to whom the poet owed his banishment from Florence. In reply, Dante begs him in God's name to tell him first 'what strips him so'; whereupon Forese gives the explanation which we have already examined, namely that the scent of the water and fruit of the first Tree have a divinely-given power to quicken the desire to eat and drink, and that by hunger and thirst the whole crowd of penitents 're-sanctify themselves.' He adds that they suffer a periodical renewal of the pain, evidently in the regular return of appetite or fits of craving:

> 'And not one time alone, in circling round
> This course, our pain renews itself;
> I say pain, and I ought to say solace;
> For that will doth lead us to the Tree,
> Which led Christ joyfully to say "Eli,"
> When with His veins He set us free.'[1]

We have in these lines the fundamental idea of Purgatorial pain, in that absolute acceptance of it as the will of God which turns it into positive comfort—the idea which Newman works out so wonderfully in his *Dream of Gerontius*. To show the perfection with which their wills accept the purifying pain, Forese does not hesitate to draw a parallel between the penitents and Christ at the darkest moment of His Passion. The cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' in

[1] *Purg.* xxiii. 70-75.

spite of its apparent desolation, had a central heart of secret joy. The mere fact that He was able even then to say 'Eli,' '*my* God,' was to Dante's mind the sign and proof of the joyful surrender of the inner will even to that awful pain. It was by this joyful will, which not even the forsaking of God could cause to falter, that He was able to set us free by His blood: had it faltered the Atonement would have failed. It is by the perfect union of their wills with His in joyful surrender to suffering for sin, that the freedom which He bought for the penitents becomes their own, and is wrought into the substance of their souls.

Dante is greatly surprised to find Forese so high up as this Terrace. He had died on July 28, 1296, not quite five years before; and his 'power to sin more' had come to an end—that is, his last illness had probably made the sin of gluttony a physical impossibility—before his soul turned to God in penitence. According to the law of Purgatory, he ought to be still on the Mountain's base below, 'where time by time is restored,' detained as many years as his repentance was postponed. Forese replies that he owes this grace to his widow, 'la Nella mia.' Her tears and prayers drew him from Ante-Purgatory and freed him from the other circles, and led him to drink thus early 'the sweet wormwood of the torments.' The eulogy pronounced on Forese's widow is in striking contrast to his treatment of her during life, if we are to believe the extremely coarse sonnet in which Dante describes it. 'The present passage may have been intended by the poet to atone in a measure for that poem, and to offer the widow some consolation by representing Forese, in his new condition, as one of the tenderest of husbands.'[1] He certainly atones for past neglect. His widow is the one good woman left in Florence. It is her very loneliness in good works which gave her prayers their special power with God; her virtue is more precious in His eyes, because maintained in face of universal profligacy.[2] Then

[1] *Purgatorio* (Temple Classics), p. 294.

[2] Just as, conversely, it is regarded as an aggravation of Eve's sin that

follows a stern denunciation of the shamelessness of the Florentine women, which reminds us of a well-known passage in Isaiah (iii. 16-24). They surpass the women of Barbagia in Sardinia, notorious for their immorality; and did ever barbarian or Saracen women require, as they do, interdicts from the pulpit 'to make them go covered'? The reference is uncertain, as it seems to be doubtful whether any sumptuary laws were passed about the time of which Dante speaks.[1] The luxury of the Florentine women, however, was notorious; and the subject is introduced here because it is akin to the sin of this Terrace: immoderation in food, in drink, and in dress not infrequently go together. Aquinas discusses the question 'whether indulgence of the love of dress is a mortal sin in women'; and replies that 'if they dress themselves with this express purpose, that people may fall in love with them, they sin mortally: but if it is done out of thoughtlessness, or vanity and love of display, it is not always a mortal sin, but venial sometimes.'[2] Forese foretells that the vengeance of Heaven will fall on these shameless women ere the child now soothed with lullaby shall have bearded cheeks. This is usually taken as a general prophecy of the various calamities which befell Florence in the years immediately succeeding 1300, but the reference is probably much more specific. If we suppose that the passage was written sometime between 1310 and 1313, when the exile's hopes of Henry VII. ran high, the vengeance here may be identical with that which he predicted in his famous Letter to the Florentines, written in 1311, in which he 'breathed forth threatenings and slaughter.' The words with which Forese introduces his prophecy: 'For, if my foresight here

it was committed when she was alone, without companion to suggest it (Canto xxix. 26). See p. 399. There is no reason to suppose, as some do, that Dante is casting any reflection upon his own wife.

[1] Napier, however, in his *Florentine History* (i. 404), writing of the period 1300-1307, says: 'Sumptuary laws against the vanity of women were renewed; no chaplets or crowns of gold or silver nor any jewels could be longer worn, and fathers, brothers, and husbands were made answerable for all female transgressions of this vain and venial nature.'

[2] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxix. a. 2.

deceive me not,' are echoed in the Letter: 'And—if my presaging mind be not deceived, as it announceth that which it hath learned from truth-telling signs, and arguments that may not be gainsaid,—your city, worn out with long-drawn sufferings, shall be given at last into the hands of the aliens, the greatest part of you scattered in death and captivity, while the few that are left to endure their exile shall look on and weep.'[1] This date would give a definite meaning to the still beardless cheeks of those who were but infants a dozen years before.

We now come to a passage of considerable difficulty, in which the poet plainly makes confession of some evil of his past life in which Forese and he were partners. Seeing that Dante 'veiled the sun' from him, Forese begs him to 'hide himself no more,' that is, to inform him how he came to be there while still in the flesh. In reply Dante reminds him of some evil of the past which they shared together, and explains that Virgil had rescued him from that sinful life when the moon was full the other day, had led him so far up the Mount, and would continue to guide him until he reached the presence of Beatrice.[2] The interest gathers round the sinful passage in the past:

> 'If thou bring back to mind
> What thou with me hast been and I with thee,
> The present memory will be grievous still.'[3]

The meaning is much disputed. From the Terrace we might infer that it is a confession of riotous feasting in which the two were boon-companions. Vernon calls this a 'purely unimaginative view,' and refers to the testimony of Boccaccio and Filippo Villani that Dante was abstemious in his diet. The obvious answer is that both might be true—the change to temperance might have come just about this time, as, indeed, Dante here says it did. The probability, however, is that the refer-

[1] *Epis.* vi. 4 (Wicksteed's Translation).

[2] It has been pointed out that this is the only time Dante speaks of Beatrice by name to any of the souls on the Mount—probably because his friend Forese would understand the reference.

[3] *Purg.* xxiii. 115-117.

ence is to six sonnets which passed between the two, and in which they abuse each other with all the candour of friendship. It were well for the reputation of both of them if the view which some take that the poems are spurious could be proved true, for they are no credit to either. Dante calls Forese a glutton, and pities the wife who has so neglectful a husband; and Forese retorts by calling Dante and his father cowards. There is no need to enter further into the unsavoury quarrel, especially as Dante recalls it in this passage only to express his sorrow for it. Death had washed away all bitterness; the dead face of his friend, he says, had made him weep; and now, in the light of a world nearer God, they both see and confess the sin and folly of the wounds they once inflicted on each other.[1]

Dante, as they walk on, asks where Forese's sister Piccarda is, and is told that she

> 'triumphs rejoicing
> Already in her crown on high Olympus.'

Soon Dante meets her in the Moon, the lowest of the Ten Heavens of Paradise. The Moon in its perpetual changes symbolizes souls that have a certain element of inconstancy mingled with their virtue; and Piccarda is there because she broke her vows as a sister of St. Clara. True, she was forced to it by her brother Corso, who carried her off from her convent in order to have her married; and Dante discusses how far such breaking of vows is blameworthy. Forese says here that he knows not which was greater—her beauty or her goodness; and when Dante meets her in Paradise he finds that her goodness has so transmuted her earthly beauty with 'he knew not what of the divine,' that he fails to recognize her,—just as, for the opposite reason, he failed to recognize her brother here.[2]

[1] The Sonnets, which are, as Karl Federn says, 'a kind of tap-room poetry, especially those of Dante,' are translated by Rossetti in *Dante and his Circle*, pp. 243-245. In his *Dante* (Temple Primers) Mr. E. G. Gardner says they are 'almost certainly authentic'; but in his recent edition of Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* (Temple Classics), he omits them, apparently as apocryphal or of no importance. It would certainly be a relief to believe that Dante never wrote those attributed to him. Scartazzini, however, accepts them as genuine.

[2] *Par.* iii. 34 ff.

Forese then points out several of the shades, otherwise unrecognizable because of their extreme emaciation. Not one gave him 'a black look' for naming him, their willingness to be identified, and to have their sin laid bare, being evidently proof of the genuineness of their repentance.[1] First comes Bonagiunta of Lucca, the poet. Beyond him is Pope Martin IV., whose face is even more shrivelled[2] than the rest, because he once 'held Holy Church within his arms.' His papal name he took from St. Martin of Tours, of which he had been treasurer. He died in 1285 of a surfeit, it is said, of eels from the Lake of Bolsena, stewed in vernaccia wine.[3] The next name is Ubaldino dalla Pila, of the noble Tuscan family of the Ubaldini: his brother, Cardinal Ottaviano, is in the fiery tombs of the Epicureans in the City of Dis; his son Roger, Archbishop of Pisa, is in the Hell of Traitors, his head gnawed eternally by Count Ugolino, whom he starved to death; and he himself is here, using his teeth on the empty air for very hunger. 'Boniface who pastured many peoples with the rook' comes next—an Archbishop of the extensive diocese of Ravenna, and whose crosier is said to have been in the form of the 'rook' or castle at chess.[4] The word 'pastured' is probably ironical—a glutton was more likely to 'pasture' himself than his flock. The last to be named is a nobleman of Forlì, Messer Marchese, whose special vice was drunkenness, and whose thirst is even greater now. As we glance over this list, Dante seems to have chosen these names expressly because they are all distinguished men who might be expected

[1] Contrast this with the desire of the souls in the lower depths of the Inferno to remain unknown—Venedico Caccianimico, Guido of Montefeltro, Bocca degli Abati, etc.

[2] Dante's word is *trapunta*, 'quilted' or 'embroidered'—the shrivelled famine-stricken face resembling a piece of sewed work.

[3] Toynbee quotes a satirical epitaph:

'Gaudent anguillæ, quia mortuus hic jacet ille
Qui quasi morte reas excoriabat eas.'

It was during his reign that the Sicilian Vespers occurred (March 30, 1282). See *Par.* viii. 67-75.

[4] Rev. H. F. Tozer says a pastoral staff of this peculiar shape is in the public Library of Ravenna. It had belonged to the Camaldolese monks of Classe, and may have been the crosier of Boniface, though no facts are known which connect it with him (*Toynbee's Dante Dict.* Art. 'Ravenna').

to be superior to the low vice of gluttony and drunkenness; as if to impress on us that neither poetic genius, nor ecclesiastical dignity, nor nobility of birth can save human nature from the most degrading sins. Popes, archbishops, poets, noblemen—all are here, circling round this Terrace in the struggle to conquer one of the most debasing of the lusts of the flesh.

Then follows a conversation with Bonagiunta of Lucca, whom Dante singles out from the rest because of his evident desire to be acquainted with him. From his starved lips he heard a murmur of 'he knew not what Gentucca,' a word which has given rise to much discussion. Two interpretations are suggested. According to the first, *gentucca* is for *gentuccia*, the common people, almost the rabble. Bonagiunta is then taken to be muttering a protest against Dante's judgment of his native city. In the *Inferno* (xxi. 37-42), he had declared that Lucca was 'well furnished' with barrators; and Bonagiunta here foretells that a lady of the city will make him change his ill opinion of it. The second and generally received view is that Gentucca is the name of this lady. She has been identified 'as a certain Gentucca Morla, wife of Cosciorino Fondora of Lucca, in whose will (dated Dec. 15, 1317) she is several times mentioned.' In 1300, the ideal date of the poem, she 'did not yet wear the wimple,' that is, she was still unmarried. It is thought that the reference is to a visit Dante may have paid to Lucca between 1314 and 1316, when it was held by the great Ghibelline captain Uguccione della Faggiuola, while others put the date between 1307 and 1310.[1] The question of Dante's relations with this lady has been much discussed; but the only ground for suspicion is the curiously furtive way in which Bonagiunta mutters her name, as if insinuating something doubtful. This, however, is too slender a reason for so grave a charge; and it is very unlikely that Dante would contemplate an intrigue years in the future, at

[1] See Gaspary's *Early Italian Literature*, p. 275 (Oelsner's Translation). Dr. Moore says: 'I am not aware of any definite allusions whatever in the *Purgatorio* to events after 1310, though there are admittedly some in the *Inferno*' (*Studies*, 3rd Series, p. 262 n.).

the very moment when he is about to submit himself to the fires which burn away this deadly sin. All that Bonagiunta says is that she will make the city of Lucca pleasant to him,—a statement which may, and probably does mean nothing more than that she showed him a kindness and hospitality, which he here wishes to acknowledge.[1]

Then follows what is virtually Dante's judgment of the various schools of Italian lyric poetry which had preceded his own 'dolce stil nuovo.' Bonagiunta asks him if he is the maker of 'the new rhymes beginning,

Ladies who have intelligence of Love.'

This is the first line of the first Canzone of the *Vita Nuova*. Dante quotes it again in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (ii. 12), and obviously regards it as the poem in which he broke away finally and completely from the artificiality of the prevailing schools. The passage is of extreme interest from the critical point of view:

> And I to him: 'I am one who, when
> Love inspires me, note, and in that mode
> Which he dictates within, go uttering it in signs.'
> 'O brother, now I see,' said he, 'the knot
> Which the Notary, and Guittone, and myself
> Held back, short of the sweet new style I hear.
> I see well how your pens go following
> Full closely after him who dictates,
> The which did certainly not happen with ours.
> And he who sets himself to look beyond,
> Sees no more from the one style to the other'—

that is, has lost all sense of distinction between the two, is incapable of any literary judgment.[2] In this passage Dante pronounces his verdict on two schools of poetry, the Sicilian and the philosophical. To the former belonged Jacopo da Lentino in Sicily, who was fond of

[1] For the lady's sake more than Dante's, I desire to retract what I said on this subject in my *Exiles of Eternity*, p. 8. Further consideration brings me to the conclusion given above. But really Dante ought to be more careful of a lady's reputation than to mutter her name in this suspicious way.

[2] *Purg.* xxiv. 52-62. See, however, Butler's note in *Purgatory*, 303 ff. in which he paraphrases Dante's words as follows: 'For whoso, merely at his own pleasure, sets himself beyond (does not follow) the *dittator* [*i.e.* Love] has no chance of arriving at the new and improved style.'

calling himself 'the Notary' in his poems. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 12) Dante praises him for his 'polished language'; but the entire school to which he belonged, instead of being a natural and spontaneous growth of Sicilian soil, was an artificial imitation of foreign models. 'The subject-matter of the Provençal poetry,' writes Gaspary, 'is transferred to another language, without undergoing any change in the process beyond sacrificing much of its richness. The new tongue exercised no invigorating influence. It was in reality nothing but a new dress in which the old subject was clothed, and this innovation could not possibly increase the æsthetic value of the poetry; on the contrary, the still more unwieldy idiom caused it to lose much of the grace and elegance it had originally possessed. The theme of the troubadour poetry, chivalrous love, now reappears in the same forms that had previously served for its expression.'[1] But the conception itself was a foreign one, and therefore the expression of it was artificial and unreal. The same criticism applies substantially to the philosophical or doctrinal school of Italy, to which Bonagiunta of Lucca and Guittone of Arezzo belonged. The latter, indeed, may be regarded as its most characteristic representative. Addington Symonds gives him the credit of being the first to make the attempt 'to nationalise the polished poetry of the Sicilian Court, and to strip the new style of its feudal pedantry. It was his aim, apparently, dismissing chivalrous conventions, to use the diction and the forms of literary art in an immediate appeal to the Italian people.'[2] His success was not great; even after his conversion, the Provençal forms still clung to him, and rendered his didactic poetry cold, artificial, unmoving. Twice in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante attacks him for his language and style;[3] and in

[1] *Early Italian Literature*, p. 59 (Oelsner's Translation). For translations from Jacopo da Lentino, Guittone d'Arezzo, and Bonagiunta, see Rossetti's *Dante and his Circle*, Part II.

[2] *Renaissance in Italy*, iv. 39 (ed. 1898). For an account of Guittone's conversion, and its effect on his poetry, see Gaspary's *Early Italian Literature*, pp. 85-89.

[3] Bk. i. 13; ii. 6.

Canto xxvi. 124-126, he holds up his former fame as an example of the way in which men follow 'rumour more than truth.' Over against both schools Dante has no hesitation in setting his own 'sweet new style.' Love was their great theme as well as his; but, whereas with them it was an artificial imitation of a foreign model or the slave of a frigid and unreal didacticism, he made it the inspiration and 'dictator' of substance and form alike. Doubtless, as Professor Norton says, 'there are some among his earlier poems in which the "sweet new style" is scarcely heard; and others, of a later period, in which the customary metaphysical and fanciful subtilties of the elder poets are drawn out to an unwonted fineness'; nevertheless Dante could not but be distinctly conscious that what raised him above his predecessors was his superior power of following the natural dictates of the heart.[1]

We now return to the conversation with Forese. Allowing his fellow-penitents to sweep past, he waits behind to ask Dante one final question,—how long it will be until he sees him again. Dante's reply is that he cannot tell how long his life may be, but that, whatever the time, it will exceed his desire, so evil grows the place where he was set to live. Whereupon Forese, who is thus ignorant of Dante's death, is able to foretell that of the man who is most to blame for this ruin of Florence—his own brother, Corso Donati. He foresees him in a few years dragged at a beast's tail toward the infernal valley, his body striking on the ground and vilely disfigured. Villani's account is somewhat different. Corso was undoubtedly ambitious and unscrupulous; and when he married the daughter of the great Ghibelline leader, Uguccione della Faggiuola, the Florentines not unnaturally had grave suspicions of his loyalty. He was believed to have sent for his father-in-law to aid him in seizing the city. Nobles and people rose and demanded his death. 'He was first cited to appear, and then proclamation was made against him, and then he was condemned; in less than an hour,

[1] *The New Life of Dante*, p. 101.

without giving any longer time for his trial, M. Corso was condemned as a rebel and traitor to his commonwealth'; and without a moment's delay magistrates, people, and executioner set out for his house to carry out the sentence. Barricading the approaches to his palace, Corso defended himself bravely for the greater part of a day; but when hope of help from his father-in-law failed, he was forced to flee. Certain Catalan mercenaries captured him at Rovezzano; and when, in order to escape the indignity of public execution, he flung himself from his horse, one of the foreign soldiers thrust his lance through his throat. 'He was,' says Dino Compagni, 'a knight of great mind and name, gentle of blood and manners, most fair of body even to old age, of a beautiful figure, with delicate features, and a white skin; a pleasing, wise, and eloquent speaker: and he always aimed at great things, intimate and companion of great lords and noblemen, with a great retinue of friends, and famous throughout all Italy. An enemy he was of the people and of the popolani, beloved of the soldiers, full of malicious thoughts, evil and cunning.'[1] It is, of course, easy to say that the prophecy put into his brother's mouth consigning him to the Inferno is Dante's customary way of disposing of his enemies; but one has only to read Villani's account of the ambitious, cruel, and unscrupulous part Corso played in Florentine politics to be convinced that the poet had ground for his judgment beyond that of personal bitterness against the man to whom he owed his exile and its attendant miseries.[2]

Shortly after Forese's departure to overtake his companions, the three poets come to the second of the Trees,

[1] *Florentine Chronicle*, Book III.

[2] See *Chronicle*, viii. 49, 96. Villani gives much the same estimate as Dino Compagni: after admitting his courage and eloquence, he says: 'But he was very worldly, and in his time caused many conspiracies and scandals in Florence to gain state and lordship'; and he holds up his fate as a warning to those who come after. According to Vasari, Giotto painted the portraits of Corso Donati and Ser Brunetto Latini along with that of Dante in the Bargello of Florence. Butler suggests that Dante's language here may be metaphorical: 'The *bestia* would be the popular party, of which Corso once thought himself the head, while he was really being dragged on by them, and by which he was ultimately destroyed.'

the meaning of which has been already discussed. After passing it, they walked on more than a thousand paces along the solitary way, each in silent contemplation, probably of all they had seen and heard upon this Cornice. Then suddenly a voice startles them: 'What go ye pondering thus, ye three alone?' It is the Angel of the Terrace, who points out to them the way up. When Dante lifted his head to look at him, the sight blinded his eyes:

> Never were there seen in a furnace
> Glasses or metals so shining and so red.

It is obvious that this contains some symbolism, but what, it is not easy to say. To quote passages from Scripture about 'the colour of burnished brass,' does not help us much.[1] It is perhaps more to the purpose to refer to the angel that saved 'the three holy children' in the midst of the burning fiery furnace: 'The angel of the Lord came down into the oven together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them.'[2] The difficulty here is that this protection was given not for temperance, but for their refusal to become idolaters: unless, indeed, we are to regard it as a reward of that abstinence which they shared with Daniel. On the other hand, the union of fire and wind is exactly what we have in this Angel of Temperance. Probably the meaning is to be sought in the full mediæval conception of this virtue. According to Aquinas, Temperance covers both this Terrace and the next; and if we assume that this Angel, who stands between the two and points the way from the one to the other, is the symbol of both, the reference to the furnace would be in part an anticipation of the fires which burn away sensual intemperance on the next Terrace.[3] Dante is

[1] *E.g.* Ezek. i. 7; Dan. x. 6; Rev. i. 15.

[2] *Song of the Three Holy Children* (vv. 26, 27)—an apocryphal addition in the Vulgate to the third chapter of Daniel.

[3] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxli. a. 4. Compare the reference here to glasses and metals in a furnace with the 'boiling glass' of xxvii. 49.

blinded by the sight, and has to fall behind his Teachers and follow by hearing alone: in other words, Temperance is a burning angelic virtue, too bright yet for his sin-weakened eyes; all he can do is to walk by the hearing of the ear, following the word of Virgil and Statius, of Reason and Christian Philosophy. The red colour of the furnace is probably symbolic of Love: nothing burns out the false love but the true,—the earthly and sensual, but the Divine and heavenly.

Also, nothing but this burning, cleansing fire of temperate love gives the true joy and use of all the senses, as Dante indicates in a very beautiful piece of symbolism. The angelic furnace, so far from sending forth a blast of consuming fire, breathed the sweet life-giving breeze of a May morning, 'stealing and giving odour':

> And even as, herald of the white dawn,
> The breeze of May moves and gives forth fragrance,
> All impregnate with the grass and with the flowers,
> So felt I a wind give in the middle
> Of the brow, and well felt I the moving of the plumes,
> Which made me feel the wafture of ambrosia,—[1]

food of the gods for that of gluttons. The meaning is plain. The early rising, the first breath of a May morning, the whitening of the dawn, the fresh dewy fragrance of grass and flowers: these are the joys reserved for the man who has never blunted the keen edge of his senses with riotous living. The glutton and drunkard after a night's carouse is sinking into insensibility just when 'the wafture of ambrosia' is stealing forth on the sweet morning air. This perfect joy of Temperance is given to Dante in the fresh dawn of the next day, when, having burnt the passions of sensuality out of his soul, he enters 'the divine forest' on the Mountain top, and sees Matelda gathering flowers. It stands in contrast to two 'false images' of pleasure which he has already passed: mere animal sensuality, symbolized by the Leopard, the beautiful beast that met him at the outset of his pilgrimage, and which he also connects with a sweet spring

[1] *Purg.* xxiv. 145-150.

morning; and the refined, luxurious form of the vice, represented by the manifold colours and odours of the grass and flowers in the Valley of the Princes down below.[1]

The wind of the Angel's wings having wafted away the sixth P from Dante's brow, he is now able and worthy to hear the Beatitude of Temperance: 'Blessed are they which do hunger . . . after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' It is paraphrased at some length:

> 'Blessed are they whom so much grace
> Illumines, that the love of taste makes not
> Too great desire in their breasts to smoke,
> Hungering at all times so far as is just.'[2]

This paraphrase is meant to bring out the golden mean in food and drink. In the *Convito* (iv. 17), Temperance is described as the 'rule and bridle of our gluttony and of our excessive abstinence in the things which preserve our life.' 'Hungering so far as is just' means the avoidance of too little, as well as of too much. Aquinas in his discussion of Fasting speaks firmly against excessive abstinence: 'Right reason does not sanction so great a diminution of food as that the support of nature becomes impossible; because as Jerome says: "There is no difference between killing yourself in a long time and in a short: because he offers a holocaust out of rapine, who immoderately afflicts his body either with too great want of food or with shortness of sleep." In like manner also right reason does not make such a diminution of food as to render the man incapable of doing the work that is his duty. Hence Jerome says: "A rational man loses dignity, when he prefers either fasting to charity, or watching to have his wits about him."' On the other hand, Dante regarded even the terrible fasting of the penitents of this Terrace as 'hungering so far as is

[1] See *Inf.* i. 31-43 (Leopard); *Purg.* vii. 73-81 (Valley of Princes); *Purg.* xxviii. 1-69 (Matelda).

[2] *Purg.* xxiv. 151-154; Matt. v. 6. The blessedness of *thirst* after righteousness is given by Dante to the virtue of Justice and Liberality in the preceding Terrace. See p. 295.

just,' because it had a threefold object, which Aquinas held to be in accordance with right reason: the repression of the lusts of the flesh, the elevation of the mind to God in contemplation, and the making of satisfaction for sin.[1]

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxlvii. a. 1.

CHAPTER XXI

Terrace VI—Gluttony

2. *The Purgatorial Body*[1]

The three poets now enter the stairway that leads to the last of the Terraces. In his usual astronomic fashion Dante indicates that it is now about two o'clock in the afternoon, and therefore too late for loitering. They push on in haste, the narrowness of the pathway compelling them to go in single file, perhaps to indicate that repentance is a solitary road which each man must tread alone. It is Dante's custom, however, to employ the time on the stairways in discussing with his Guide some question connected with the Terrace he has left or the one to which he goes; and at the present moment he is burning to ask one question suggested by the emaciated shades whom he has just seen:

> 'How can one grow lean
> There where the need of nourishment toucheth not?'

The living skeletons whom he had left behind were bodiless souls, and could therefore have no need of food. How, then, was it possible for them to experience sensations of hunger and thirst, and pine away for want of what they did not need, and could not use?[2]

The answer is one of the most difficult things to understand in the whole poem, and it is doubtful whether, with all its scholastic subtlety, it really sheds much light on the problem. Virgil, in his char-

[1] Though the discourse on the Purgatorial body is not spoken on this Terrace, yet as it springs from the sin of Gluttony, the title of this chapter may be allowed to stand.

[2] *Purg.* xxv. 20, 21.

acter of the natural Reason, can offer nothing but analogies. The first is the mysterious way in which Meleager 'was consumed by the consuming of a firebrand.' Seven days after his birth, the Fates foretold that his life would last so long as a brand then burning in the fire remained unconsumed; whereupon his mother Althæa extinguished it and locked it in a chest. Meleager when he grew to manhood enraged her by slaying her brothers; and in revenge she burned the brand, and her son died. The idea seems to be akin to the superstition that an enemy can be killed by the wasting away of his waxen effigy before the fire.[1] Dante appears to have believed that there exist mysterious occult forces in Nature by which even inanimate things have power to waste away the human frame; and if so, there is no difficulty in believing that the Trees had the same mysterious influence.

The second analogy is the image reflected in a mirror:

> 'Think how at your gliding
> Glideth within the mirror your own image.'

This seems to touch the profounder truth that the 'spiritual body' is a mirror which reflects exactly the moral state of the soul. The soul of a glutton grows emaciated through the pampering of the flesh; and at death this spiritual emaciation is reflected, line for line, in the body which it creates for itself.

Virgil, however, is aware that these are only figures and analogies, and therefore refers the whole matter to Statius for its final solution. Statius must here represent the natural Reason enlightened by Christian philosophy. In point of fact, a great part of his answer is, as Dr. Moore says, 'a *réchauffé* of Aristotle, *De Gen. Anim.*, until a point is reached where Dante has to part company with Aristotle's guidance, and to follow Aquinas and other Christian teachers in expounding a Creationist theory of the origin of the soul.' Statius therefore represents the point of transition from the philosophy of the natural Reason to that of Revelation.[2]

[1] Comp. *Inf.* xx. 121-123.

[2] *Studies in Dante*, 1st Series, p. 32.

The explanation begins with the Aristotelian doctrine of generation. Since man sums up in himself all the worlds of life beneath him in a higher unity, the embryo in its growth passes through three soul-forms. First comes the *vegetable* soul, which differs from a plant in this, that it possesses the power of further development. This further development carries it on to the *animal* soul, first in its simplest form, so 'that now it moves and feels like a sea-fungus,' and then in the formation of the organs necessary for the various animal powers. The next stage is the *rational* soul; and Statius warns Dante that this is the point at which he must be careful not to go astray. The passage is so important that it will be well to have it before us:

> 'How from an animal it becometh human
> Thou seest not yet; this is such a point
> That one more wise than thou it once made err,
> So that by his teaching he made separate
> From the soul the possible intellect,
> Because by it he saw no organ taken up.
> Open thy breast unto the coming truth,
> And know that so soon as in the embryo
> The articulation of the brain is perfect,
> The First Mover turns himself to it, with joy
> Over so great an art of nature, and doth breathe
> A spirit new with power all replete,
> Which whatso it finds active there draws
> Into its own substance, and makes itself one soul,
> That lives, and feels, and itself within itself turns back.'[1]

The wiser man than Dante who fell into error on this subject is generally believed to be Averroës, though some think Aristotle is meant. 'On many grounds,' as Dr. Moore says, 'the former seems more probable . . . partly because even if Dante were conscious that Aristotle himself fell into this error, he would be more likely to keep this in the background, especially when he had a scapegoat ready to hand in the person of

[1] *Purg.* xxv. 61-75. Compare Aquinas, *Contra Gent.* Book II. chaps. lxxxviii-lxxxix.: 'The vegetative soul, therefore, which is first in the embryo, while it lives the life of a plant, is destroyed, and there succeeds a more perfect soul, which is at once nutrient and sentient, and for that time the embryo lives the life of an animal: upon the destruction of this, there succeeds the rational soul, infused from without'—*i.e.* by God direct (Father Rickaby's *Of God and His Creatures*, p. 168).

Averroës.' Still more decisive for this view is the fact that Aquinas, whom Dante here follows closely, had written a special treatise in refutation of the teaching of the great Arabian sceptic on this very subject. The difficulty gathers round the words 'possible intellect.' Following Aristotle (*De An.* III. iv. 3), scholastic philosophy drew a distinction between the 'possible intellect' and the 'active intellect.' The former is viewed as a mere potentiality—an original and innate capability of universal ideas. But this 'potential intellect' is made actual only by the operation on it of the 'active intellect.' This 'active intellect' is regarded by Averroës as the one transcendent, universal, and eternal intellect, bearing the same relation to the 'possible intellect' as the sun does to the eye; and his error, to which Dante here refers, is that of limiting the individual existence of the human intellect to this present life, and recognizing the eternity only of the one universal 'active intellect.' He was led to this view because he saw no special organ set apart for the intellect, as the eye is for vision. Obviously, such a doctrine left no room for personal immortality. The individual intellect was only a passing form which the universal acted on for a moment, and then absorbed into itself.[1]

Statius, of course, cannot admit a doctrine which explains himself and his fellow-penitents out of existence. The above passage is a kind of quintessence of the entire doctrine of Aquinas upon the Soul, and every clause may be said to be a fence erected to shut out some heresy. First, the Platonic pre-existence of the soul is denied, perhaps with special reference to its form in Origen's teaching, namely that the entrance of the soul into the body is a penalty inflicted on it for its sin in a previous life—a species of incarceration in matter. Against this, Statius, or rather Aquinas, holds that the soul is not produced before the body. The psychological moment, if the phrase may be allowed, is

[1] See Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*, ii. 415, 416; Aquinas, *Summa*, i. q. lxxvi. a. 1; lxxix. a. 2, 3; *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 59 (the notes on pp. 122-124 of Father Rickaby's translation are clear and valuable).

when 'in the embryo the articulation of the brain is perfect.' This is why the soul is called in line 72 a '*new* spirit'—it is an absolutely new creation, neither coming from another existence, nor created along with all other souls at the beginning of the world, and, as it were, waiting its turn to be born in the flesh, but direct from the hand of God.[1] This brings us to a second heresy which is repudiated. Traducianism denies that the human soul is the immediate creation of God, and traces it to the same laws of generation by which the body is produced. In this passage, as elsewhere, Dante follows Aquinas in accepting the counter doctrine of Creationism. The First Mover, rejoicing to find such 'an art of Nature' as the human brain in the embryo, breathes into it 'a new spirit filled with virtue.'[2] It is difficult to say what precisely is meant by 'virtue.' We get a perfectly good meaning, however, if we take the word in the sense Aquinas gave it, as covering all the powers contained in the rational soul—the intellectual and moral virtues. The soul, when God breathes it into the brain of the embryo, is filled with these virtues, not in actuality, but in potency. The great difficulty of theologians has been to harmonize this theory of Creationism with the doctrine of original sin. If God infuses a soul 'filled with virtue,' how comes it to be infected with the sin of Adam? The answer of Aquinas seems to be that it is corrupted and disordered by the flesh with which it is united.[3] Into this question, however, Dante does not here enter, but passes on to the unity of the human soul. This unity has been frequently denied. If there exists a threefold soul in man—vegetable, animal, intellectual—then, it is argued, man is in reality three separate souls. Against this

[1] Origen, *De Prin.* i. 7; Aquinas, *Summa*, i. q. xlvii. a. 2; q. xc. a. 2-4; q. cxviii. a. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 44.

[2] *Summa*, i. q. xc. a. 2; q. cxviii. a. 2, etc. *Contra Gentiles*, ii. 87-89.

[3] *Summa*, i-ii. q. lxxxiii. a. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, iv. 52. 'The body inflicts no physical damage on the soul, but merely entangles it in the guiltiness of the seed of Adam. The flesh, disordered by the loss of original justice, being the recipient of the soul, the soul is received in a disordered manner, and becomes guilty by implication or infection' (*Manual of Cath. Theology*, by Wilhelm and Scannell, ii. 32).

Dante asserts that the 'new spirit' draws into its own substance the active powers of the two lower souls so completely that they form one single indivisible soul, which performs the functions of all three—living, feeling, reflection or self-consciousness. This meets the difficulty of Averroës, that he saw no organ set apart for the intellectual soul: instead of requiring a separate organ, it is itself, so to speak, the spiritual organ of the vegetable and sensitive souls. The union of the human and divine is as close and indivisible as that of the sun's heat with the juice of the grape, when it is changed into wine.[1]

The immortality of the soul being thus securely based in the doctrine of Creationism, Statius proceeds to inform Dante of what happens to it at death. The first question is how much survives the destruction of the body, and in what state does it pass into the spiritual world:

> 'And when Lachesis hath no more thread,
> Itself it looses from the flesh, and in potency
> Bears with itself both the human and the divine:
> The other powers all of them dumb—
> The memory, the intelligence, and the will,
> In act far keener than they were before.'[2]

This is once more a paraphrase of Aquinas. 'The human' is the vegetable soul and the animal, which come through parents. The sensitive and nutritive faculties which belong to these are not destroyed by death; they still exist in the soul, but since the physical organs by which they passed into act are gone, they exist only in potentiality, and must wait for the restoration of the body in the Resurrection before they can

[1] *Purg.* xxv. 67-78; *Summa*, i. q. lxxv. a. 2; q. lxxvi. a. 3. Comp. Canto iv. 1-16, pp. 53, 54.

[2] *Purg.* xxv. 79-84. In *Summa*, i. q. lxxvii. a. 8 Aquinas says: 'All faculties of the soul inhere in the soul alone as in their principle. But certain faculties, as the intellect and will, inhere in the soul alone as in their subject; and such powers necessarily remain in the soul when the body is destroyed. Certain other faculties, such as all the faculties of the sensitive and nutritive part, are in the being composed of body and soul as in their subject. But the subject being destroyed, the accident cannot remain. Hence body-and-soul being broken up, such faculties do not remain actually but only virtually in the soul, as in their principle or root.'

become operative once more. But with 'the divine'—the intellectual soul inbreathed by God—exactly the opposite has taken place. Memory, intelligence and will are quickened into a far intenser activity, as if the mere removal of the flesh concentrated the whole being on the spiritual life, undisturbed and unrelieved by distractions of time and sense. It is a profoundly solemn conception, in which some Protestant theologians have found the truth for which they believe the doctrine of Purgatory stands. Writing of souls in the intermediate state, for example, Bishop Martensen says: 'Their kingdom is not one of works and deeds, for they no longer possess the conditions upon which works and deeds are possible. Nevertheless, they live a deep spiritual life; for the kingdom of the dead is a kingdom of subjectivity, a kingdom of calm thought and self-fathoming, a kingdom of *remembrance* in the full sense of the word, in such a sense, I mean, that the soul now enters into its own inmost recesses, resorts to that which is the very foundation of life, the true substratum and source of all existence. Hence arises the purgatorial nature of this state. As long as man is in this present world, he is in a kingdom of externals, wherein he can escape from self-contemplation and self-knowledge by the distractions of time, the noise and tumult of the world; but at death he enters upon a kingdom the opposite of all this. The veil which this world of sense, with its varied and incessantly moving manifoldness, spreads with soothing and softening influence over the stern reality of life, and which man finds ready to his hand to hide what he does not wish to see,—this veil is torn asunder from before him in death, and his soul finds itself in a kingdom of pure realities. The manifold voices of this worldly life, which during this earthly life sounded together with the voices of eternity, grow dumb, and the holy voice now sounds alone, no longer deadened by the tumult of the world; and hence the realm of the dead becomes a realm of judgment.' The passage might have been written in exposition of Dante's lines: it is precisely

this profound inevitable self-introspection by a memory, intelligence, and will, sharpened by the new conditions to an intense keenness, which forms one principal element in the purgatorial discipline of every Terrace.[1]

Statius proceeds to say that the moment the soul is loosed from the flesh it falls, in a marvellous fashion, on one of the two shores—that of Acheron for Hell, or that of Tiber for Purgatory on the way to Paradise; and 'there first it knows its roads'—that is, the course of hopeless pain or purifying discipline through which it is doomed to pass. Aquinas speaks of the same immediate falling of the souls to their own place, according to the heaviness or lightness of their sins: 'As in bodies there is weight, or lightness, by which they are borne to their own place, which is the end of their motion, so also there is in souls merit or demerit, by which souls arrive at reward or punishment, which are the ends of their actions.'[2]

Then follows an exposition of the way in which the soul, having reached its own place, rays out a temporary ethereal body for its intermediate state between death and the Resurrection:

> 'Soon as place there doth circumscribe it,
> The virtue informative rays round about,
> In form and size as in the living members.
> And as the air, when it is charged with rain,
> By another's rays which are reflected in it,
> With divers colours shows itself adorned,
> So there the neighbouring air doth set itself

[1] *Christian Dogmatics*, 458. Compare Isaac Taylor's *Physical Theory of Another Life*, chap. xiii., where he argues that the body is a curb on the moral faculties through the physical exhaustion which strong emotion produces, and that its removal will give these faculties a range and intensity inconceivable in the present life. This, however, is not identical with the view of Aquinas, who holds that the restoration of the body in the Resurrection is necessary to the final perfection of the nature of man.

[2] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxix. a. 2. According to the doctrine of the Church, there are two Judgments—the Particular, immediately the soul leaves the body; and the General, at the last day, when body and soul are re-united. Aquinas guards against the idea that God judges twice over, or inflicts a double punishment. Three reasons are given: (1) each man must be judged as an individual and also as a member of the race; (2) there must be a public as well as a private manifestation of the Divine justice; (3) punishment and reward cannot be fully received until the reunion of soul and body (*Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxxxviii. a. 1).

In that form which the soul that has remained
Seals upon it by virtue of its power;
And then in fashion of the little flame
Which followeth the fire where'er it shifts,
After the spirit followeth its new form.
Since afterwards it takes from this its semblance,
It is called a shade; and from this it organizes
Each of the senses, even to the sight.
From this we speak, and from this we laugh,
From this we make the tears and sighs
Which throughout the mount thou may'st have heard.
According as the desires and other affections
Make an impress on us, the shade is shaped;
And this is the cause of what thou marvellest at.'[1]

Many of the commentators declare that this also is drawn from Aquinas; but the passage to which they usually refer (*Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. 79) deals with the Resurrection body, which is an entirely different subject. In this section of the *Summa*, the question is discussed whether the same body as was worn on earth will be restored in its integrity, to the very hair and nails, and the answer is in the affirmative. The subject Statius is expounding is the quite different one of the body of the intermediate state. In point of fact, Aquinas says expressly that there is no such body. His teaching is as follows. At death, the sensitive powers remain potentially in the soul, which goes immediately to its own place. This separated soul has no body; nevertheless, in some manner unknown to us, but in harmony with spiritual substance, it exists in a corporeal place. The lack of the bodily organs renders all action of the sensitive powers impossible,—precisely the kind of action Dante has been causing the souls to pass through in both Hell and Purgatory.[2] He gives them visible forms and all their bodily senses: they see and hear, speak, laugh, weep, sigh—in short, he makes them do the things which Aquinas declares they cannot do. It is not a case, however, of intentional contradiction of his master; it is simply, as Dr. Hettinger says, a case of 'dramatic' necessity.[3] The poem could never have

[1] *Purg.* xxv. 88-108.
[2] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxix. a. 1, 2; i. q. lxxvii. a. 1, 8.
[3] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 281 (English Translation).

been written if the souls had not been visualized by some form of embodiment, however ethereal. The *principle* of this temporary embodiment is drawn from the teaching of Aquinas on the Resurrection, namely, that the soul is the 'informative virtue' which shapes the body in exact harmony and correspondence with its own spiritual state. The soul, in fine, is 'the efficient cause' of the body. 'For the relation of the soul to the body is as the relation of the art to the work of art. . . . Whatever appears explicitly in the work of art, the same, in its entirety, is contained implicitly and originally in the art itself. Similarly also whatever appears in the parts of the body, is in its entirety contained originally, and in a certain manner implicitly, in the soul. As therefore the operation of the art would not be perfect, if the work of art lacked anything which the art contains; so neither could a man be perfect, unless the whole of what is implicitly contained in the soul, were displayed outwardly in the body; nor, also, would the body answer to the full proportions of the soul. Since therefore it is necessary in the resurrection that the body of man be wholly correspondent to the soul—because it will not rise save in accordance with the relation which it holds to the rational soul—it is necessary also that man rise perfect, inasmuch as thus he is restored to the final perfection which is to be obtained. It is necessary, therefore, that all members which are now in the body of man be restored in the resurrection.'[1] It is obviously in accordance with this principle of correspondence between soul and body that Dante here frames the body of the intermediate state. Properly speaking, it is not really a body, but a shadowy simulacrum of one. The 'informative virtue' of the soul rays itself out on the surrounding air as the sun does upon a cloud, and forms an ethereal image of itself. The point of importance for the purpose Statius has in view is that this shade is the exact image and reflection, as in a mirror, of the spiritual condition of the soul. As 'the desires and other affections' set their

[1] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxxx. a. 1.

seal upon the soul, so the soul in turn sets its seal upon the encompassing air. The emaciation of the shades, which roused Dante's wonder, is therefore simply the visible image of the hunger which consumed their souls. Obviously it cannot be any hunger of the body, since it is expressly stated that the sensitive powers are all 'mute.' It can only be spiritual hunger—hunger for what the two Trees represent, freedom from inordinate desire, and the attainment of the virtue of true temperance. To this spiritual hunger they are goaded by the keener activity of 'memory, intelligence, and will.'

This spiritual correspondence of the body to the soul is probably the solution of certain apparent anomalies in the *Commedia*, for this exposition by Statius applies in principle to all the souls in the intermediate state. It has been often remarked that the souls of the lost have bodies quite different from those of penitents—not etherealized shades which cannot be embraced, but bodies so gross and palpable that Dante falls on one and tears out handfuls of hair. The reason is obvious: the gross material 'body' is the spiritual image of the gross material soul which has made evil its good.[1] When the power of sin is broken by penitence, the new and higher spiritual condition of the soul shows itself in the refining and etherealizing of the 'body' which is its reflected image. And finally, in Paradise where the process of purification is completed, the perfect holiness enhaloes itself in a sphere of Divine light, which serves as a temporary 'body of glory,' and varies according to the special quality of holiness attained. In Canto xiv.

[1] Again Dante is following Aquinas: 'Inasmuch as their soul will have its will turned away from God and deprived of its proper end, their bodies will not be *spiritual* (1 Cor. xv. 44), in the sense of being wholly subject to the spirit, but rather their soul will be in effect carnal.' Their bodies will not be '*agile*,' but 'ponderous and heavy and insupportable to the soul.' They will be liable to suffering *from sensible things*. They will also be '*opaque and darksome*,' to correspond with their souls which are void of the Divine light. 'This is the meaning of what the Apostle says, that *we shall all rise again, but we shall not all be changed* (1 Cor. xv. 51): for the good alone shall be changed to glory, and the bodies of the wicked shall rise without glory' (*Contra Gentiles*, iv. 89). Aquinas, it is true, is speaking of the Resurrection body, but Dante applies the *principle* to 'separated souls' in the intermediate state.

of the *Paradiso* the relation between this star-like body of the intermediate state and the body of the resurrection is discussed. The whole of the present passage, from the growth of the embryo on to the intermediate body, is regarded by Dean Plumptre as a mere digression, very much out of place, and also as 'something like a display of a wide encyclopædic knowledge.' In reality, it is Dante's explanation of the principle on which he visualized all the spirits of the departed, that, namely, of the strictest correspondence between the soul and the 'body' which its 'informative virtue' creates for itself. The gross palpable bodies of the lost, the etherealized bodies of the penitents, and the bodies of light of the redeemed, are thus seen to be essential parts of the spiritual symbolism.

CHAPTER XXII

Terrace VII—Sensuality

The three Pilgrims now emerge from the stairway, and find themselves upon a very dangerous path. It is the Seventh and last Terrace, on which Sensuality is purified by fire. The bank which ascends on the poet's left hand to the Earthly Paradise above shoots forth a flame which encircles the whole Cornice; while from the Cornice itself rises a blast which drives the flame up against the rock, leaving a narrow pathway along the edge of the cliff that falls to the Terrace below. Along this pathway Virgil, Statius, and Dante walk in single file, and in the order named; while the penitent souls keep marching round within the fire. Dante tells us that his attention was divided between the spirits in the flame and his own footsteps; and Virgil warns him more than once to keep a tight rein on his eyes, for a slight thing might cause a false step here. The meaning is probably that the sin of the Terrace is one which usually gains an entrance through the eyes;[1] and that there is also the danger of falling back into the kindred vice of Gluttony out of which he has just climbed.

Before we go further, it is necessary to make up our minds concerning the symbolism of the fire and of the wind which blows it back and up. It is by no means easy to do so. It seems to be commonly taken for granted that the fire represents the sin itself, the burning of the unholy passion which inflamed the sinners on earth. It is a familiar figure, and one is not prepared to deny that it is one element of the symbolism. If this is all, however, it carries one great difficulty with

[1] Matt. v. 28; 2 Pet. ii. 14.

it. Dante tells us the penitents are most careful not to emerge from the flame: are we to suppose that he means to say they were careful to remain within the fire of their own sensual passion? That seems to be an impossible meaning, and we must search further. In the first place, it is to be remembered that this being the last Terrace, we are now drawing near to the Earthly Paradise, the Garden of Eden, and therefore to the Tree of Life in the midst of it. That Tree, according to Scripture, was guarded by Cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the approach.[1] There is no mention of such a sword elsewhere in the poem, and it is difficult to believe that Dante would entirely omit so striking a piece of allegory. One is tempted to find the flaming sword in this circle of fire turning every way round the Mountain, and most effectually keeping the way of the Tree of Life. The Angel who stands outside the flaming circle may be taken as one of the Cherubim, and the one who welcomes Dante on the inside as another—this being the only Terrace on which two Angels are stationed.

The fire, then, is a Divine and holy fire, doubtless of judgment, but also of mercy. Since its object is to burn out unholy love, the one question is: what is capable of performing this great purifying operation? It is matter of undoubted knowledge and experience that nothing but a pure and holy love can burn out an impure and unholy one. We cannot be far wrong if we regard this hedge of flame as the fire of Divine charity, burning away every impure passion which keeps man from the Tree of Life. This accounts for two things,—the pain, and the determination to endure the pain. When a pure love and an impure struggle for possession of a human soul, there cannot but result a pain as of fire; but the soul knows well that there must be no attempt to escape from it—its one hope lies in keeping itself within that fire of Divine love, till it has burnt it clean and ceased to be a pain.

Almost more difficult to understand is the blast which

[1] Gen. iii. 24.

blows the flame upward. We may set aside at once the idea that it is the wind of Temperance from the Angel's wings on the Terrace below, for the simple reason that Dante expressly says it came from *this* Terrace: 'the Cornice breathes a blast upwards.' We must find the meaning, therefore, somewhere in the Cornice itself and the sin it purges away. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that the wind here has some connection of thought with that which whirls the Sensual on without respite through the dark air of the Inferno.[1] There it represents the whirlwind of their own lust, which gives them no rest. Here, may we not take it as meaning substantially the same thing, with certain differences? It springs from the Cornice itself, from the ground, from the dust of which we are made, to indicate that the blast of sensual passion is low and earthly. But to these penitents it is no longer a whirlwind, but a steady breeze. Its direction is upward—their very passion is heavenward, whereas that of the lost sensualists flung them in every direction, 'hither, thither, down, up.' And, most significant of all, this wind of passion fans the flame of their purifying penitence, for it is a familiar experience in repentance that our past sins, and the remains of them within us, at once increase our pain and urge us on to more strenuous efforts to work the evil out. It is just the wind of their own earthly passions which fans the flame of charity into a consuming fire, and blows it upward until it envelopes their whole nature. It is, of course, a paradox, but a paradox amply borne out by the experience of every true penitent.

The souls 'in the heart of the great burning' first sang a hymn, '*Summæ Deus clementiæ*,' then proclaimed aloud an example of Chastity, and then sang the hymn again. This hymn is sung at Matins on Saturday, and, being a prayer against the lusts of the flesh, has a special fitness for this Terrace.[2] The first great example of the virtue to be won is, as usual, taken

[1] *Inf.* v. 28-33.

[2] In the modern Breviary the line reads 'Summæ *Parens* clementiæ,'

from the life of the Virgin: '*Virum non cognosco.*'[1] The second is drawn from mythology: the indignation with which Diana drove her nymph Helicë or Callisto out of the wood when she discovered her amour with Jupiter.[2] Then follows the praise of

> wives and husbands who were chaste,
> As virtue and the marriage vow imposes.

Dante is here thinking of no monkish asceticism within the marriage bond, but simply of that ideal of chastity which the very nature of the bond involves. There is a remarkable passage in the *Convito* (iv. 28) which shows that he saw no incompatibility between marriage and 'religion' in its true scriptural sense. After telling how Sir Lancelot and Guido da Montefeltro lowered the sails of their worldly activities as they drew near the port of death, and devoted themselves to the religious life, he adds that this religious life is equally incumbent on those within the marriage bond: 'It is not possible to excuse any one because of the bond of matrimony which holds good in old age; because not he alone turns to religion who makes himself in habit and life like St. Benedict and St. Augustine and St. Francis and St. Dominic, but also it is possible to turn to a good and true religion whilst remaining in matrimony, for God wishes nothing religious of us but the heart. And therefore St. Paul says to the Romans: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."'[3]

and it is sometimes thought that Dante made a slip of memory. Dr. Moore, however, shows that the original form was as he gives it, the alteration being made in 1631 (*Studies in Dante*, 2nd Series, pp. 260, 261). Newman's translation of the hymn almost completely disguises its very plain references to the sin of this Terrace.

[1] Luke i. 34.

[2] Ovid, *Metam.* ii. 401-530. It gives us something of a shock to find, after such stories as these, that Dante does not shrink from calling Christ the 'highest Jove': '*O sommo Giove*' (*Purg.* vi. 118).

[3] Rom. ii. 28, 29. The passage is a protest against the limitation of 'the religious life' to the cloister. To make 'religion' equivalent to a religious order, is to declare the family life irreligious.

The closing words of Canto xxv. seem to me to be generally misunderstood:

> With such cure it behoves, with such a diet
> That the wound at last be sewn up—[1]

the cure or treatment being the cautery of the fire, and the diet the prayer of the hymn and the examples of chastity. The common translation of the closing line is 'the last wound'; but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that '*dassezzo*' is an adverb, meaning 'at last.' In other words, Dante at this point is not thinking of the Seven Deadly Sins as seven separate wounds, but as one great wound which is now 'at last' sewn up and finally closed by the 'cure' and 'diet' of this Terrace. Although they were inscribed as separate sins on his own brow, yet he now feels the unity of them, as if the whole wound remained open until this final vice was sewn up. The fact that it is represented as the last evil of which human nature is purified does not mean, as we might imagine, that Dante regards it as the worst. The exact opposite is the case. In the *Inferno* Sensuality is set highest of all the sins, because it is the excess of a natural appetite, and one Divinely ordained for the continuance of the race. It is for the same reason it is also highest here, and the last to be burnt into purity.

We now return to the narrative. The afternoon sun striking on Dante's right shoulder flung his shadow on the flames and thereby caused the glow of them to appear redder.[2] This is at once noticed by the souls within the fire who crowd toward him in wonder, taking care, however, not to step beyond the edge of the burning circle. One of their number, who turns

[1] *Purg.* xxv. 138, 139.

[2] Ruskin (*Modern Painters*, II. Pt. iii. sec. ii. ch. iii. § 2), contrasting Milton's and Dante's description of flame, quotes this passage (Canto xxvi. 4-8) and says: 'That is a slight touch; he has not gone to Ætna or Pelorus for fuel; but we shall not soon recover from it, he has taken our breath away, and leaves us gasping. No smoke nor cinders there. Pure, white, hurtling, formless flame; very fire-crystal, we cannot make spires nor waves of it, nor divide it, nor walk on it; there is no question about singeing soles of feet. It is lambent annihilation.'

out to be the poet Guido Guinicelli, begs Dante to satisfy their 'thirst' for a solution of the mystery:

> 'Tell us how is it thou makest of thyself
> A wall to the sun, as if thou hadst not yet
> Entered within the net of death.'[1]

Before Dante can reply, his attention is arrested by a second procession of penitents going in the opposite direction, that is, to the left, which indicates that their form of sensuality is the more heinous. The two bands immediately hasten to 'greet one another with an holy kiss,' according to the apostolic injunction,[2] and then strive to outcry each other in confession of their sins, the newcomers calling out 'Sodom and Gomorrah!' and the others the brute-like passion of Pasiphaë. Then parting they go in opposite directions, alternately singing the hymn '*Summæ Deus clementiæ*' and repeating the cry that most befits their sin—the example which best acts as 'bridle' to their special form of passion.[3]

Guido Guinicelli now returns to the edge of the fire, and Dante threw him and his companions into bewilderment by the incredible news that he is here purifying his soul while still in the prime of life, 'neither unripe nor ripened,' a thing so incredible that they gaze at him in dumb amazement, as a mountaineer does at the wonders of a city. But Dante has his question also to ask: who are the two bands whom he saw meet and kiss and part?—and receives the following answer:

> 'The folk that come not with us have offended
> In that for which once Cæsar, triumphing,
> "Regina" against himself heard called:
> Therefore they separate, crying out "Sodom,"
> Themselves reproving, as thou hast heard,
> And aid the burning by their shame.
> Our own transgression was hermaphrodite;
> But because we observed not human law,
> Following even as beasts our appetite,
> In infamy of us, by us is read,
> When we part company, the name of her
> Who made herself a beast in the beast-like frame.'[4]

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[1] *Purg.* xxvi. 22-24.
[2] 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 1 Pet. v. 14, etc.
[3] *Purg.* xxvi. 25-48.
[4] *Purg.* xxvi. 76-87.

It is not advisable to enter into a detailed exposition of this passage. The general meaning is simple enough, in spite of the obscurations of commentators. The opening lines refer to Sodomy, the same unnatural sensuality for which Dante's friend Brunetto Latini is consigned to the Seventh Circle of the Inferno.[1] The reference to Cæsar is an allusion to shameful stories of his life at the court of Nicomedes of Bithynia, with which his soldiers taunted him.[2] The remaining lines describe the sin of the penitents who are moving to the right side by side with Dante, the direction showing that this is the lesser evil. It is, to quote Plumptre's note, 'that of natural passion as contrasted with unnatural, the sin of Hermes and Aphrodite, the types of male and female, of Paolo and Francesca; but the natural passion is illicitly indulged, breaks through the restraints of reason and of the laws that are meant for man, as having a higher life than beasts, and therefore becomes as simply animal as the degradation indicated by the name which they repeat as a confession that they too had acted as "brute beasts that have no understanding."'[3]

The passage which follows gives us one of the most interesting glimpses we have into Dante's development as a poet. Up to this time he was ignorant of the identity of this soul who spoke to him out of the fire. Now, when he hears him name himself Guido Guinicelli, it is clear that but for the flames he would have drawn near to embrace him as Sordello did Virgil. For a long time he walked by his side in thought, without speech or hearing, absorbed in gazing at the man to whom he traced his poetic birth,

> the father of me
> And of the others my betters, who ever
> Used sweet and graceful rhymes of love.[4]

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[1] *Inf.* xv. 22 ff.

[2] See Art. 'Cesare' in Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*.

[3] The passage is based on *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cliv. where six species of 'Luxuria' are distinguished and their guilt compared.

[4] *Purg.* xxvi. 97-99. Butler thinks it would have been mock humility of Dante to call others his 'betters' (*miglior*), and suggests to read *maggior*, 'my elders.'

At last, having sated his eyes, he offered him his service 'with the affirmation which compels belief.' In reply to Guinicelli's question why he holds him in such affection, Dante says:

> 'The sweet sayings of yours
> Which, long as shall endure the modern use,
> Shall make forever dear their very ink.'[1]

Guinicelli, however, has grown very humble about his poetry. Pointing to a soul in front of him, the famous troubadour Arnaut Daniel, he pronounces him 'a better smith of the mother tongue'—far superior to Giraut de Borneil of Limoges, whom 'fools' hailed as the 'master of the troubadours.' And then, humbly begging Dante to say one Pater Noster for him as far as they need it in that sinless world—that is, omitting the petition against temptation, to which they are no longer subject[2]—Guinicelli disappears in the flames like a fish that sinks to the bottom.

Guido Guinicelli is undoubtedly the greatest Italian poet before Dante. Of his life we know little beyond that he was a member of the Ghibelline family of the Principi of Bologna, was banished from his native city in 1274, and died shortly after, probably in 1276, at a comparatively early age. Dante's admiration of him is evident in the numerous passages in which he quotes him, and still more in the general influence which he exercised on his poetry. At first, indeed, Guido was a disciple of the very Guittone of Arezzo of whom he speaks somewhat contemptuously in the present passage (vv. 124-126); but he soon shook off his frigid influence and struck a new and original note which sent its vibration through the poetry of men like Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoja, and, as we have seen, Dante himself. He 'solved the problem,' writes Addington Symonds, 'of rendering the Sicilian style at once national in spirit and elevated in style. He did so by making it scientific. Receiving from his Italo-Provençal predecessors the material of chivalrous love, and obey-

[1] *Purg.* xxvi. 112-114.

[2] *Purg.* xi. 19-24. See p. 174.

ing the genius of his native city,[1] Guido rhymed of love no longer as a fashionable pastime, but as the medium of philosophic truth. Learning was the mother of the national Italian poetry. From Guido started a school of transcendental singers, who used the ancient form and subject-matter of exotic poetry for the utterance of metaphysical thought. The Italians, born, as it were, old, were destined thus to pass from imitation, through speculation, to the final freedom of their sensuous art. Of this new lyric style—logical, allegorical, mystical—the first masterpiece was Guido's Canzone of the Gentle Heart. The code was afterwards formulated in Dante's "Convito." The life it covered and interpreted was painted in the "Vita Nuova." Its apocalypse was the "Paradiso."'[2]

Dante's estimate of the two Provençal poets named by Guido is by no means acquiesced in by modern critics, any more than by his contemporaries; but perhaps the reason is that they miss the point of his comparison. It is as a 'smith of the mother tongue' that he gives the palm to Arnaut Daniel over Giraut de Borneil. To the latter, indeed, he accords the very title which Dante claims for himself, 'the poet of rectitude';[3] but, while he admits that he wrote *canzoni* in the most illustrious style,[4] he plainly regarded him as failing in

[1] The reference is to the famous university of Bologna, which had won her the title of 'the learned.'

[2] *Renaissance in Italy* (1898), iv. 40. See also Gaspary's *History of Early Italian Literature*, chap. iv. The Canzone referred to is familiar through Rossetti's beautiful translation beginning:

Within the gentle heart Love shelters him,
As birds within the green shade of the grove.
Before the gentle heart, in Nature's scheme,
Love was not, nor the gentle heart ere Love.

It seems to have laid an extraordinary hold on Dante's imagination. He quotes it in the *Convito* (iv. 20) and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (i. 9; ii. 5); Francesca alludes to it in *Inf.* v. 100, and the opening lines of Sonnet x. of the *Vita Nuova* are a direct reference to it:

Love and the gentle heart are one same thing,
Even as the wise man in his ditty saith.

[3] *De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 2. 'If we duly consider, we shall find that the illustrious writers have written poetry in the vulgar tongue on these subjects exclusively; namely, Bertran de Born on Arms, Arnaut Daniel on Love, Giraut de Borneil on Righteousness, Cino of Pistoja on Love, his friend [*i.e.* Dante himself] on Righteousness.'

[4] *De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 6.

that subtle and 'exquisite' use of words and rhymes in which Dante himself is the supreme master. Giraut deliberately threw off the obscure and intricate style of his fellow-troubadours, and aimed at a clearness, sincerity, and manliness which gained him the admiration of the common people. Arnaut Daniel prided himself on standing at the opposite pole of the 'hard style,' as it is called. 'Its chief characteristics were: enigmatical expressions, strange plays on words, hard constructions, alliterations, and above all, unusual and difficult rhymes'; and, although he pushed the style to an obscurity and artificiality which repel modern critics, it was not altogether unnatural that Dante should admire him as a great artist and artificer of his mother tongue. For he himself, as one says, was 'struggling to forge a close, intense diction out of an uncultivated language,' and therefore understood well the great difficulty of the task.[1]

When Guido Guinicelli vanished, Dante drew forward to the soul he had pointed out, promising him 'an honourable place' in his poem if he revealed his name, which he had not yet heard. Arnaut answers in the Provençal tongue, and the copyists, as Toynbee says, have played havoc with his words. The following is Longfellow's translation:

> 'So pleases me your courteous demand,
> I cannot and I will not hide me from you.

[1] Dante admired the *sestina*, which is said to be Arnaut's invention, and imitated it in his 'Al poco giorno, ed al gran cerchio d'ombra' (*De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 10). On the strength of the words in vv. 118, 119:

> 'Verses of love and proses of romance
> He surpassed all,'

the Romance of *Lancelot du Lac*, which proved the ruin of Paolo and Francesca (*Inf.* v. 127-138), has been attributed to Arnaut. This is a mistake, as he wrote no Romances. 'There is little doubt that the correct rendering of the passage is that suggested by the comment of Buti: "He surpassed all (authors of) verses of love and prose of romance"—that is to say, having regard to the passages from the *De Vulg. Eloq.*, quoted above (i. 10), "he was superior to all who have written either in Provençal (*versi d'amore*) or French (*prose di romanzi*)."' (Toynbee's *Dante Studies and Researches*, 262-265). In his *The Troubadours at Home* (ii. 273), Professor Justin H. Smith gives the following appreciation: 'Provençal poetry as a life culminated, it seems to me, in Bernart de Ventadorn, as a science in Arnaut Daniel, and as an art in Guiraut de Borneil.' The first-named is never mentioned by Dante.

I am Arnaut, who weep and singing go;
Contrite I see the folly of the past,
And joyous see the hoped-for day before me.
Therefore do I implore you, by that power
Which guides you to the summit of the stairs,
Be mindful to assuage my suffering!'[1]

And then, after this modest request for Dante's prayers, like Guido, he hid himself in the refining fire.

We now draw near to the cleansing of Dante's soul from its last stain of sin. 'The day is far spent and the night is at hand'; but, at this height up the Mount a few last beams linger to give the opportunity of purification before darkness gives the rein to evil passion. Suddenly the Angel-guardian of the Terrace barred the way, singing the last of the Beatitudes:

BEATI MUNDO CORDE.[2]

Dante gives no description of the appearance of the Angel; but two things are noted—his joy, and the quality of his voice, 'far more living than our own.' According to Dante the voice is the unfailing index of spiritual power, from the stammering tongue of the Siren of his dream up to the music of Paradise,

That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To him that sits thereon.[3]

The joy of the Angel is the direct spiritual issue of his purity. For purity gives the vision of God which is the

[1] Dr. Moore's Oxford Text is slightly different:

'Tan m'abelis vostre cortes deman,
Qu'ieu no-m puesc, ni-m vueil a vos cobrire.
Jeu sui Arnaut, que plor, e vai cantan,
Consiros vei la passada folor,
E vei iauzen la ioi qu'esper, denan.
Ara vos prec per aquella valor,
Que vos guida al som de l'escalina
Sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor.'

There are here only two differences of any importance, and even they change the sense but slightly. In the fifth line, for Longfellow's *lo jorn*, the day, Dr. Moore reads *la ioi*, the joy; and in the last line, for *a temprar*, we have *a temps de*: Be mindful *in due time* of my grief. The critical version which Toynbee quotes from Renier, agrees with Longfellow in the former case, and with Dr. Moore in the latter (*Dante Dictionary*, 'Arnaldo Daniello').

[2] Matt. v. 8. In *Summa*, ii-ii. q. viii. a. 7, Aquinas says this Beatitude answers to 'the gift of intellect.'

[3] Milton's *At a Solemn Musick*.

one eternal blessedness of every creature capable of knowing Him:

> Light intellectual fulfilled of love,
> Love of true good fulfilled of joy,
> Joy which transcendeth every sweetness.[1]

Between Dante and this joy of the pure in heart lay the awful circle of fire, the flaming sword of the Cherubim. The Angel refused to allow the Pilgrims to take another step until the fire bit: they must now enter it and hearken to the song of the Angel on the other side, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.'[2]

Dante, however, can scarcely be persuaded to enter the flaming circle; and as this is the only Terrace on which he shrinks from the purifying discipline, it is obvious that his unwillingness has some special personal significance. At the Angel's command he became as one 'who is put into the trench,'[3] and wrung his hands in anguish, recalling vividly the human bodies he had seen burnt at the stake—the doom, indeed, to which he himself had been sentenced by his native city. His own reason in the person of Virgil urges him by two arguments to enter the cleansing fire. First, he reminds him of the way in which he saved him from the power of Geryon, the Demon of Fraud, who guarded the Eighth Circle of the Inferno:[4] if he was able to protect him from that far fouler sin, what will he not be able to do now that he is 'nearer God'? The general idea seems to be that to a man like Dante Fraud has less power of temptation than Sensuality, even though the latter is 'nearer God,' the highest up the Mountain-side, while the former is sunk almost to the lowest depths of Hell. The lighter sin clings longest: reason and conscience are alike powerless of themselves to shake it off. The fiery pain of parting with it is too intense.

Virgil's second argument is that the fire, though it is torture, cannot kill: a millennium in the heart of it

[1] *Par.* xxx. 40-42. [2] Matt. xxv. 34.

[3] *Purg.* xxvii. 15. Scartazzini thinks the reference is to the doom of assassins who were set head downwards in a hole in the earth, and the soil filled in around them. See *Inf.* xix. 49-51.

[4] *Inf.* xvii. 79-99.

could not burn a hair of his head. If he doubt it, let him hold the hem of his garment to the flame. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is that the fire of Purgatory is material, and that its least pain exceeds the greatest in the present life. Aquinas argues that it is within the power of God to punish even 'separated souls' by means of corporeal fire.[1] It is doubtful whether this corporeal fire was in Dante's mind, any more, for example, than corporeal smoke on the Terrace of Anger. For one thing, he was not yet a 'separated soul'; and, if our interpretation is right, the fire here represents the purifying love of God—the holy fire of charity burning out the unholy fire of lust. His reason and conscience both told him he ought to enter that pure flame of Divine love; but he knew only too well that the impure passions he had indulged would make it a burning and almost intolerable pain.

Seeing him stand 'rooted, and against his conscience,' Virgil uses a third argument, namely, that nothing but this flaming wall is between him and Beatrice. The manner of Virgil's allusion to Beatrice is somewhat perplexing. When he saw that her name had softened Dante's obduracy, he nodded his head playfully and said,

> 'How?
> Do we wish to stay on this side?'—then smiled,
> As one does to a child who is conquered by the apple.[2]

This sounds, as Vernon says, like the 'persuasive banter that a parent or a nurse uses to a reluctant child'; but mere banter is surely beneath the dignity and gravity of the occasion. Dante compares himself to Pyramus, whom Thisbe's name caused to open his eyes in the very article of death: the point of the comparison being that just so the name of Beatrice called Dante back from the spiritual death of clinging to this

[1] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxx. a. 3; Append. q. ii. a. 1. Compare Augustine's *City of God*, Bk. xvii. ch. iv., and *Dialogues of St. Gregory*, Bk. iv. ch. xxix.: 'If a spirit without a body can be held and kept in the body of a living man, why, likewise, after death, may not an incorporal spirit be held and kept in corporal fire?' (An Old English Version).

[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 43-45.

sin. It is impossible that such a name and such a crisis should be turned into a piece of mere playful banter. Virgil must have meant to recall all that Beatrice stood for in Dante's life. There was first the pure and tender love of his youth, as it is revealed in the *Vita Nuova*; by his own confession, it was unfaithfulness to it that led his feet into sinful ways of life.[1] Then, in the second place, Dante's mystical imagination had transfigured the woman into a symbol of Divine and Heavenly Wisdom; and it is here we must look for the final meaning of the present passage. The arguments of Reason alone are powerless to overcome this sin: unholy love can be conquered only by a pure and heavenly love. But even Virgil does not yet understand all that this conquest involves; it seems to him like the holding up of an apple to a child. Dante was soon to learn that it was no such merry sport. When he met Beatrice on the Mountain-top, he found that something more than 'this wall' of fire stood between him and her. In spite of all the penitential discipline of the Seven Terraces, she exacts a new sorrow and wrings from him a fresh confession with bitter tears. If we are to give any definite meaning to Virgil's banter, it is that Dante's own reason gave him no hint, even at this last stage of his purification, of how serious his meeting with Beatrice would be, how stern and painful the settling of accounts for his long unfaithfulness to her memory. Here it may seem the playful holding up of an apple to a reluctant child; but when he actually meets Beatrice, he is obviously amazed and taken aback by her unexpected severity.[2]

The three Pilgrims now enter the fire, and special attention is drawn to the order in which they do so. Up to this time the order has been Virgil in front, Statius second, and Dante last. On entering the fire Virgil is still in front, but at his request Statius exchanges places with Dante, thus bringing up the rear. 'It is easier,' as Dr. Moore says, 'to feel sure that (as always in Dante) there is a purpose in this, than to say

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 121-132. See p. 443 ff.

[2] See p. 438.

with any confidence what that purpose is.' The conjecture, however, has been already hazarded that the earlier order implies partly Dante's subordination to Virgil and Statius as poets (xxii. 127-129), and partly his dependence on the latter as a Christian philosopher for his knowledge of the ethereal body of the purgatorial existence (xxv. 28-108).[1] The change of order here may imply that while the natural Reason, in the person of Virgil, can indeed lead the penitent into the purifying fire, it needs something more Christian in the rear to keep him from shrinking from the pain. We shall see that a third change in the order takes place on the top of the Mountain, Dante's purified soul then leading the way.[2]

The fire proves to be by far the severest pain that Dante has yet experienced:

> When I was within it, into boiling glass
> I would have flung me to refresh myself,
> So without measure was the burning there![3]

If those who see in such a passage evidence of the poet's having fallen into this sin are, as Dean Plumptre thinks, 'the unclean birds of literature who scent carrion everywhere,' we must just bear the shameful name as best we can. One thing is quite certain, that Dante is here, as on the other Terraces, confessing and expiating his sins; and the passage just quoted is the sharpest cry of pain the penitential discipline has yet wrung from him. If it does not indicate a personal experience, it is so utterly misleading that Dante has himself to blame for the misunderstanding. The question must be discussed more particularly when we come to the stern accusation which Beatrice is soon to drive home upon his conscience; meantime it is enough to say that there is no ground for the charges of gross profligacy which have sometimes been brought against the poet. The fiery pain he suffers is more the sign of a sensitive

[1] See p. 332 ff.

[2] The order is always significant. The places occupied by Virgil and Dante on the back of Geryon (*Inf.* xvii. 83, 84), and the order of the cardinal and theological virtues in the dance (*Purg.* xxix. 127-132), are cases in point.

[3] *Purg.* xxvii. 49-51.

conscience than of great lapses from purity; and we may well apply to him the words of Merlin:

> But if he sinned,
> The sin that practice burns into the blood,
> And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
> Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be.[1]

In the heart of the flame Virgil sustained Dante by discoursing of Beatrice: 'Already I seem to see her eyes.' This is the first reference to a peculiar symbolism which runs through the rest of the poem—that of the *eyes* and *smile* of Beatrice, the Heavenly Wisdom. 'We must know,' says the *Convito*, 'that the eyes of Wisdom are her *demonstrations*, in which we see the truth with the greatest certitude; and her smile is her *persuasions*, in which the inner light of Wisdom shines without any veil.'[2] The smile of Beatrice is beyond Virgil, the mere natural Reason; but already the demonstrations of her eyes begin to 'enamour his soul.' In other words, the purity which Dante is gaining in the fire is creating in his reason a demonstration and certitude of the truth which he never had before. It is the beginning of the Beatitude of the pure in heart—the 'earnest' of the final vision of God. We may note here that there is no mention of the Angel on either side of the flaming circle having wiped the last P from Dante's brow: we are obviously meant to understand that it was burnt out by the fire.

The singing of a voice on the other side guided them through the flames, and greeted them when they emerged with the words: '*Venite, benedicti Patris mei*,' an earnest of the welcome Christ would give them as Judge 'in the Great Day.'[3] The voice came from within a light so bright that Dante's eyes could not bear it. The implication is that he is yet far away from that

[1] *Idylls of the King*: 'Merlin and Vivien.'

[2] *Conv.* iii. 15. 'Without any veil' is Miss Hillard's translation of *sotto alcuno velamento*, which she defends by a reference to the unveiling of Beatrice in Canto xxxi. 136-138. Wicksteed, however, renders it 'behind a certain veil.' The meaning is really the same: the persuasions of her smile reveal the inner light of wisdom which shines behind every veil.

[3] The welcome, of course, does not extend to Virgil, who must return to his place in Limbo.

perfect purity of heart which sees God—he is not able to look at one of His pure Angels. He has, indeed, finished the purification of penance, but this is merely preparatory to a far higher and more spiritual process of cleansing, which lasts until he reaches the Tenth Heaven. Veil after veil of sense and sin, of type and symbol, must fall from his eyes before he is able to receive the final fulfilment of the Beatitude of this Terrace. The Angel urges them to hasten their steps up the ascent before the west grows dark. He is the Guardian Angel of Eden who 'keeps the way of the tree of life,' and his 'flaming sword which turns every way' is, as we have seen, the wall of fire which encircles the whole Terrace.

CHAPTER XXIII

Dante's Third Dream: Leah and Rachel

The Pilgrims now find themselves ascending the final stairway of the Mount, concerning which Dante tells us two things—that it was straight, and that it rose toward the East, as is implied in the fact that the sun now sinking in the West threw his shadow in front of him. The moral symbolism is obvious. His soul, being now purified, has escaped from the crooked ways of sin on the lower slopes,[1] and has the straight path of righteousness before it; and this path leads to the sacred East, the traditional site of the sinless Garden, which is the next great stage of his pilgrimage. When, the next morning, he enters it, he finds himself face to face with the rising sun, the 'sensible' image of God.[2] Meantime, however, he is still subject to the law of the Mountain, that sunset arrests all further progress: even on the straight path of righteousness no step can be taken except in the light of God's grace. The three Pilgrims, therefore, choose three steps of the stairway as their resting-place for the night. Dante uses a curious comparison:

> Such at that hour were we, all three of us,
> I like the goat, and like the herdsmen they,
> Begirt on this side and on that by rocks.[3]

From the well-known symbolism of the goat, this

[1] Comp. *Purg.* iv. 31-33; x. 7-12.

[2] *Conv.* iii. 12. 'No object of sense in all the universe is more worthy to be made the symbol of God than the sun, which enlightens, with the light of sense, itself first, and then all the celestial and elemental bodies; and in like manner God illuminates first himself with intellectual light, and then the celestial and other creatures accessible to the intellect' (Wicksteed's Translation).

[3] *Purg.* xxvii. 76-87.

seems to be a figurative way of saying that Dante, now cleansed from Sensuality, was guarded by Virgil and Statius, as representing Reason and, in some sense, the Christian Religion. It is partly through this new purity, and partly because, being far up the Mountain, he is nearer God, that the stars shone 'clearer and larger than their wont': they stand for the virtues of the new life, now seen for the first time in their native brightness.[1] And there, musing and gazing at the stars, sleep fell upon him—

> sleep, that oftentimes
> Before a deed is done hath tidings of it.

In the hour when the morning star, burning with love, rose in the East, he had his last dream, prophetic of the coming day. It is a dream born of the purer hopes to which he has attained, as that of the Siren was the projection of his guilty fears.

> Young and beautiful in dream methought
> I saw a lady going o'er a lea
> Gathering flowers; and singing she was saying:
> 'Know whosoe'er my name doth ask
> That I am Leah, and I go moving around
> My beauteous hands to make myself a garland.
> To please me at the glass here I adorn me;
> But my sister Rachel ne'er is drawn away
> From her mirror, and sitteth all day long.
> She her own fair eyes is fain to see,
> As I to adorn me with my hands;
> Her to see, and me to work, doth satisfy.'[2]

The importance of this dream is that it forms the point of transition from the sinful life to the sinless—the hinge, so to speak, on which the purified soul swings toward the twofold Paradise of Earth and Heaven. Leah and Rachel were to all mediæval theologians the

[1] Dante in this passage may have been thinking of St. Bernard's sermon on Canticles ii. 14: 'My dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.' One of his interpretations is that these hollows are made by studious and pious souls by force of their thoughts and desires. 'For that spiritual wall yields to the pious desire of the soul, just as soft stone yields to the edge of the mason's chisel; it yields to pure contemplation, to frequent prayer' (*Cantica Canticorum*, Serm. lxii., Eales' Translation). The 'ruminating' may refer to some form of contemplation 'in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.'

[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 91-108.

types respectively of the Active and Contemplative Life. St. Gregory the Great, when the office of the Papacy was forced upon him, bewailed the loss of his Rachel, the quiet life of contemplation in his monastery: 'The beauty of the contemplative life I have loved as Rachel, barren, indeed, but clear-eyed and fair, which, although by its quiet it bears less, yet sees the light more clearly. Leah is wedded to me in the night, the active life namely, fruitful, but blear-eyed, seeing less, though bringing forth more abundantly.' Aquinas, while quoting several passages from St. Gregory, traces the distinction back to Aristotle; and decides that the contemplative life is, of its kind, the more meritorious, because it 'appertains to the love of God, whereas the active life is more directly ordered to the love of our neighbour, being "busy about much serving."'[1] It seems scarcely to have occurred to mediæval theologians that such lines of distinction are spiritually unreal,—that, for example, love of God and of our neighbour are at root one and the same, 'for,' in St. John's words, 'he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'[2] Accepting, however, the distinction as they drew it, this dream is the forecast and earnest of the blessedness into which Dante was to enter in a few hours. Leah is the dream-form of Matelda, Rachel of Beatrice,[3] on the Mountain-top. No one has more unerringly divined the central point of contrast between dream and reality than Ruskin, and I make no apology for quoting the passage in full. 'This vision of Rachel and Leah has been always, and with unquestionable truth, received as a type of the Active and Contemplative life, and as an introduction to the two divisions of the paradise which Dante is about to enter. Therefore the unwearied spirit of the Countess Matilda is understood to represent the Active life, which forms the felicity of Earth; and the spirit of Beatrice the

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxxxii. a. 2. See Arist. *Ethics*, x. 7, 8.

[2] 1 John iv. 20.

[3] In *Par.* xxxii. 7-9 Rachel is seated beside Beatrice in the third rank of the saints who compose the snow-white Rose of Paradise.

Contemplative life, which forms the felicity of Heaven. This interpretation appears at first straightforward and certain; but it has missed count of exactly the most important fact in the two passages which we have to explain. Observe: Leah gathers the flowers to decorate *herself*, and delights in *Her Own* Labour. Rachel sits silent, contemplating herself, and delights in *Her Own* Image. These are the types of the Unglorified Active and Contemplative powers of Man. But Beatrice and Matilda are the same powers, Glorified. And how are they Glorified? Leah took delight in her own labour; but Matilda—"in operibus *manuum Tuarum*"—*in God's labour*: Rachel in the sight of her own face; Beatrice in the sight of *God's face*.

'And thus, when afterwards Dante sees Beatrice on her throne, and prays her that, when he himself shall die, she would receive him with kindness, Beatrice merely looks down for an instant, and answers with a single smile, then "towards the eternal fountain turns."

'Therefore it is evident that Dante distinguishes in both cases, not between earth and heaven, but between perfect and imperfect happiness, whether in earth or heaven. The active life which has only the service of man for its end, and therefore gathers flowers, with Leah, for its own decoration, is indeed happy, but not perfectly so; it has only the happiness of the dream, belonging essentially to the dream of human life, and passing away with it. But the active life which labours for the more and more discovery of God's work, is perfectly happy, and is the life of the terrestrial paradise, being a true foretaste of heaven, and beginning in earth, as heaven's vestibule. So also the contemplative life which is concerned with human feeling and thought and beauty—the life which is in earthly poetry and imagery of noble earthly emotion—is happy, but it is the happiness of the dream; the contemplative life which has God's person and love in Christ for its object, has the happiness of eternity. But because this higher happiness is also begun here on earth,

Beatrice descends to earth; and when revealed to Dante first, he sees the image of the twofold personality of Christ reflected in her *eyes*; as the flowers, which are, to the mediæval heart, the chief work of God, are for ever passing through Matilda's *hands*.

'Now, therefore, we see that Dante, as the great prophetic exponent of the heart of the Middle Ages, has, by the lips of the spirit of Matilda, declared the mediæval faith,—that all perfect active life was "the expression of man's delight *in God's work*"; and that all their political and warlike energy, as fully shown in the mortal life of Matilda, was yet inferior and impure,—the energy of the dream,—compared with that which on the opposite bank of Lethe stood "choosing flower from flower." And what joy and peace there were in this work is marked by Matilda's being the person who draws Dante through the stream of Lethe, so as to make him forget all sin, and all sorrow; throwing her arms around him, she plunges his head under the waves of it; then draws him through, crying to him, "*hold me, hold me*" (tiemmi, tiemmi), and so presents him, thus bathed, free from all painful memory, at the feet of the spirit of the more heavenly contemplation.'[1]

This, doubtless, is the essential meaning of the passage, but the *form* in which it is stated probably contains more of Ruskin than of Dante. To the poet Leah and Rachel are indeed 'types of the Unglorified Active and Contemplative powers of Man'; but they are so because they represent, as Dr. Hettinger says, 'the comparatively defective virtue of the Old Covenant.'[2] In the *Convito* (iv. 17), when discussing the 'two felicities' of action and contemplation from the highest standpoint, Dante chooses his types from the New Testament—Martha, with the 'good felicity' of the ministry of the house, and Mary, with the 'best felicity' of sitting at Christ's feet. But in the present passage the inferior quality of both felicities is indicated by taking the types out of the lower dispensation of the Old Testament. They are

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. Pt. iv. ch. xiv. §§ 37-39.
[2] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 305.

revealed in the night, before the Sun of righteousness has risen. They come in the form of a dream, partly to indicate the inferior mode of revelation, and partly in token of the unreality and evanescence of such felicities. Rachel and Leah alike look into a mirror, because the Law had only 'a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things.'[1] And finally, as Ruskin notes, they look at themselves: Rachel, for example, is 'fain to see her own fair eyes.' The eyes are, in the *Convito*, the 'demonstrations of Philosophy'; and therefore Rachel represents that lower type of contemplation which loves to gaze, not upon the truth, but its own demonstrations of the truth, its own arguments and proofs. She stands in contrast to Beatrice who, so far from gazing in a mirror at her own eyes, makes them a mirror in which Dante sees the twofold nature and government of Christ.[2] If it be said that this is too low a view of Rachel since Dante sets her in the third tier of the white Rose of Paradise, immediately below Eve, and with Beatrice on her right hand, the answer is that there she is redeemed from the lower contemplation of the Old Covenant, and gazes no longer at her own beautiful eyes, but at Him from whom all their beauty comes.[3]

When Dante woke from his dream, he found the darkness gone, and 'the great Masters' already risen. Virgil assures him that this very day 'the sweet fruit' for which all men search will 'put his hungerings in peace'; and the words raise such waves of longing in his breast that he is borne up the stairway as upon wings. When he stands upon the highest step on the very border of Paradise Regained, the sun shining on his brow purified of every wound and stain of sin, Virgil, fixing his eyes on him, resigns his office of guide in words which are the key to the ethical meaning of the *Purgatorio*:

> 'The temporal fire and the eternal,
> Son, thou hast seen, and to a place art come
> Where of myself no farther I discern.

[1] Heb. x. 1. [2] *Purg.* xxxi. 79-81; 121-123. [3] *Par.* xxxii. 7-9.

By wisdom and by art I here have brought thee;
Take thine own pleasure for thy guide henceforth;
Forth art thou from the steep ways, forth art from the narrow.
Behold there the sun that shineth on thy forehead;
Behold the young grass, the flowers and the shrubs,
Which here the earth of itself alone produces.
Until there come with joy the beauteous eyes,
Which weeping made me come to thee,
Thou canst sit down, and thou canst go among them.
Expect no more my word, no more my sign.
Free, upright, and healthy is thy will,
And error were it not to do its bidding:
Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre.'[1]

Here again Ruskin penetrates to the central meaning, though by means of a mistranslation. Referring to Dante's horror of the savage wood in which he was lost at the beginning of the poem, he says we might be surprised to find ourselves here once more 'entering a *forest*, and that even a *thick* forest. But there is a peculiar meaning in this. With any other poet than Dante, it might have been regarded as a wanton inconsistency. Not so with him: by glancing back to the two lines which explain the nature of Paradise, we shall see what he means by it. Virgil tells him, as he enters it, "Henceforth take thine own pleasure for guide; thou art beyond the steep ways, and beyond all Art";—meaning, that the perfectly purified and noble human creature, having no pleasure but in right, is past all effort, and past all *rule*. Art has no existence for such a being. Hence, the first aim of Dante, in his landscape imagery, is to show evidence of this perfect liberty, and of the purity and sinlessness of the new nature, converting pathless ways into happy ones. So that all those fences and formalisms which had been needed for him in imperfection, are removed in this paradise; and even the pathlessness of the wood, the most dreadful thing possible to him in his days of sin and shortcoming, is now a joy to him in his days of purity. And as the fencelessness and thicket of sin led to the fettered and fearful order of eternal punishment, so the fencelessness and thicket of the free virtue lead

[1] *Purg.* xxvii. 127-142.

to the loving and constellated order of eternal happiness.'[1]

This is undoubtedly the substance of the passage, but it requires to be followed out somewhat in detail. Dante feels that he is entering upon a new and higher stage of spiritual life and experience. Hitherto his guide has been the natural Reason in the person of Virgil. This natural Reason is competent to the task of revealing the ruinous issues of sin—'the eternal fire'; competent, too, to impress the necessity of repentance, and to show in part the means of purification—'the temporal fire.' But mere Reason is not spiritual liberty: it has to argue out the path of duty by processes of logic and inference, to climb painfully 'the steep ways' from virtue to virtue, to hedge the soul in with 'the narrow ways' of penitential disciplines represented by the Terraces.[2] When the steep ways and the narrow have fulfilled their purifying work, the mere natural Reason retires; the will, now brought back to the primeval innocence from which it fell, moves to the right objects by its own sinless instinct. The forest is, indeed, pathless, but it cannot lose itself in its depths: it has an intuitive sense of the right direction, its own pleasure is its guide.

Nevertheless Dante knows well that even this intuition of right is itself only a stage to something higher still. Virgil tells him he is at liberty to sit or walk until the fair eyes of Beatrice come—the demonstrations of Heavenly Wisdom which will take the soul with joy. The sitting and walking undoubtedly represent Contemplation and Action, but only in the lower forms which are possible in the *Earthly* Paradise. For Dante has simply reached the Garden of Eden: all his long

[1] *Modern Painters*, iii. Pt. iv. ch. xiv. § 34. Ruskin's mistranslation of *arte* in l. 132 ('art' instead of 'narrow') is probably a reminiscence of Milton's description of Eden (*Par. Lost*, v. 294-297):

> A wilderness of sweets; for Nature here
> Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
> Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
> *Wild above rule or art*, enormous bliss.

[2] Mr. Tozer takes the 'steep ways' to represent the descent through Hell, and the 'narrow' the passages between the Cornices in Purgatory.

climb has only brought him back to the state of natural virtue from which the race fell in Adam. Symbolically it stands for the blessedness of this life under a just government, as is explained in the *De Monarchia* (iii. 16); and this blessedness contains the contemplation and action of the natural human powers. But there are higher forms of both, to which Beatrice will be his guide—forms appropriate to the supernatural virtues of the Heavenly Paradise; and it is to this Diviner guide that Virgil here gives place. The natural faculties have done their utmost and must now wait for a power from on high. Virgil has led Dante to the free instinctive sense of right in earthly things; Beatrice must lead him from this stage of moral intuition up to the direct, immediate vision of God, spirit to spirit.

The closing line of the Canto has given rise to much dispute:

'Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre.'

The interpretation turns on the question whether the words 'crown and mitre' refer to two authorities, the temporal and spiritual, or to the former alone. There is, indeed, much to be said for the view that Virgil is simply crowning Dante as *Emperor* over himself—declaring that his will, being now 'free, upright, and healthy,' needs no restraint of civil authority, but is a law unto itself. The words *mitratus et coronatus* were used in the Roman ritual for the coronation of the Emperor. At a certain point in the ceremony, says Gregorovius, 'the king was draped in new vestments, was made a cleric in the sacristy by the pope, was clad with tunic, dalmatica, pluviale, mitre and sandals, and was then led to the altar of S. Maurice.'[1] After further mystic rites, the crown was placed upon the mitre. This, it is said, is all that Virgil can mean.

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, iv. 60. S. Maurice was a Roman soldier who refused to give up the Christian faith at the bidding of the Emperor: 'O Cæsar! we are thy soldiers, but we are also the soldiers of Jesus Christ. To thee we owe service, to Him obedience.' It is probably for this reason the Emperor was led to his chapel: he represented the claim of the Church to be superior to Cæsar.

Whether he represents the imperial authority directly, or the natural reason and virtues on which that authority rests, he has no power to make Dante *priest* as well as king over himself—that spiritual region is one which he expressly declares belongs to Beatrice.

On the other hand, it is to be remembered that Dante regards himself as having returned to the state of man's first innocence—a state which needed neither Church nor Empire as institutions organized for authority and guidance to the human race. The necessity for such institutions arose only when the will of man ceased to be 'free, upright, and healthy.' This is expressly stated in the *De Monarchia* (iii. 4): 'If man had remained in the state of innocence in which he was made by God he would have had no need of such directive regimens. Such regimens, then, are remedial against the infirmity of sin.' On the whole, therefore, we cannot be far mistaken if we say that Virgil has brought Dante back to that state of primeval innocence which needs no external authority to command and guide it in either temporal or spiritual things. It is its own king, its own priest. This in no sense conflicts with the fact that Dante submits himself from this onward to the spiritual guidance of Beatrice. Beatrice does *not* represent the Church as an organization 'remedial against the infirmity of sin'; she stands for the inner light of Divine Wisdom, the Spirit of Revelation, and as such separates herself from the mere ecclesiastical institution. It is in this separated form, as an inward inspiration independent of organized regimens, that she henceforth guides Dante to the final vision of God, as far as that is possible to mortal man.[1]

[1] See pp. 394, 409 ff. When the Chariot of the Church—*i.e.* the entire ecclesiastical organization—is removed to Avignon, Beatrice and the Seven Virtues form a new Procession in perfect independence of the Church as an institution. See Chap. xxix.

III

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Cantos XXVIII-XXXIII

La divina foresta spessa e viva

C. XXVIII. 2.

Beati, quorum tecta sunt peccata.

Psalm XXXII. 1.

'Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
E fallo fora non fare a suo senno:
Perch' io te sopra te corono e mitrio.'

C. XXVII. 140-142.

'Quelli che anticamente poetaro
L' età dell' oro e suo stato felice,
Forse in Parnaso esto loco sognaro.
Qui fu innocente l' umana radice;
Qui primavera è sempre, ed ogni frutto;
Nettare è questo di che ciascun dice.'

C. XXVIII. 139-144.

Duos igitur fines Providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos; beatitudinem scilicet huius vitæ, quæ in operatione propriæ virtutis consistit, et per terrestrem Paradisum figuratur; et beatitudinem vitæ æternæ, quæ consistit in fruitione divini aspectus ad quam propria virtus ascendere non potest, nisi lumine divino adiuta, quæ per Paradisum cœlestem intelligi datur.

De Monarchia, III. 16.

CHAPTER XXIV

Matelda and the Divine Forest

Eager already to search within and round
The divine forest, dense and living-green,
Which to the eyes was tempering the new day,
Without more waiting I left the mountain-edge,
Taking the level country slowly, slowly,
Over the soil which everywhere breathes fragrance.
A sweetly-breathing air, that no mutation
Had in itself, smote me upon the forehead
With no heavier stroke than of a gentle wind,
By which the branches, trembling in accord,
Were one and all bending toward the part
Where its first shadow casts the Holy Mount;
Not, however, from their upright state so swayed
That the little birds among the tops
Had to cease practising their every art;
But with full joy the first breezes of the day,
Singing, received they in the midst of the leaves,
Which were keeping a burden to their strains:
Such as from branch to branch goes gathering on
Through the pine forest on the shore of Chiassi,
When Æolus unlooses the Sirocco.[1]

This, so far as his knowledge goes, Ruskin regards as 'the sweetest passage of wood description which exists in literature.'[2] Chiassi is the ancient Classis, once the port of Ravenna and station of the Roman fleet in the Adriatic, but now left far inland by the silting up of the rivers. To any one who has ever visited the

'immemorial wood
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,'

as Byron calls it, the conclusion is irresistible that the above passage is an exact description of the famous pine-forest near Ravenna, one of Dante's favourite

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 1-21. [2] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. xiv. § 35.

haunts: the sirocco from the south-east bending the trees westward, and the deep and even murmur which it makes among the pines forming a ground-tone on which float the songs of birds. To some it may seem to mar the beauty of the passage to seek in it any symbolic meaning, but for our present purpose we have no alternative. As we shall soon see from Matelda's words, there is a symbolism of the wind, its source, its movement from the sacred East, and its changelessness. But undoubtedly the leading symbolism is the forest itself and the obvious contrast it bears to the dark and savage wood in which Dante found himself lost at the beginning of the poem. The interpretation which sees in the latter an image of the wild and tangled political life of Italy is certainly true so far as it goes, and is confirmed by this deliberately contrasted picture of the forest of the Earthly Paradise. For in the *De Monarchia*, as we have more than once seen, the Earthly Paradise is a figure of 'the blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of man's natural powers'; and it is the Divinely appointed work of the Emperor to guide mankind to this happiness, 'in accordance with the teaching of philosophy.' This 'Divine forest' therefore stands as a figure of just and settled government, a gentle steady breeze of law and order from the holy East blowing westward, freedom to wander where one will, and such perfect security that not even a bird's song is silenced through fear of wrong. We may compare with the two woods the figures of Justice and Injustice painted by his friend Giotto in the Arena Chapel in Padua, perhaps while Dante himself was in that city. The contrast between the two turns upon the state of the woods—their security or insecurity. Injustice sits at his castle gate in the midst of a forest, a lance with hooks in his right hand; while in the predella beneath his feet, robbers have waylaid a lady in a wood, dragged her from her palfrey, and stript her. The figure of Justice reverses all this: in the predella below her some are dancing to music, and travellers are riding securely through the woods.

Similarly, Dante can think of no better image of unjust government than a dark and savage wood, haunted by wild beasts of lust and pride and avarice; nor of just government than a 'Divine forest,' where a lady, young and beautiful, all alone and singing in her joy, is gathering flowers in perfect safety. One of the weirdest scenes in the *Inferno* is the Wood of the Suicides, every gnarled, twisted tree of which is a soul that has committed the final outrage of murder upon itself: the Harpies of despair brood in the fruitless branches above, while below, the souls of prodigals are pursued and torn to pieces by the hounds of their own insane improvidence.[1]

The slowness with which Dante advanced into the forest depths (lines 5 and 22) cannot possibly mean that he was afraid of this unknown land: freedom from danger is its very atmosphere. The idea is either that he is too recently arrived to plunge at once into its activities; or, more probably, that the old necessity for strenuous motion is past. On the Terraces below, Virgil was constantly urging him on, rebuking his delays, reminding him of the value of the passing day. Now that his purification is completed, the need for this haste is over—he is free to sit or walk at his pleasure, for leisure to see the beauties of the sinless garden is one of the beatitudes of the sinless state. Notice, for example, that Matelda, the very type of the Active Life, is very deliberate in all her movements, like a lady in the dance, who scarcely lifts her foot from the ground. It is no contradiction to this that she is also called 'alert' (l. 83, *presta*): this union of activity and leisure is the sure sign that none of her faculties is being wasted or overdriven by sin.

Dante's freedom from fear is shown by his wandering on until he lost sight of the place at which he entered the forest—had he been afraid, he would have been more careful to secure his retreat by skirting the edge. His progress is suddenly stopped by a little river flow-

[1] *Inf.* xiii. Compare Ambrogio Lorenzetti's famous frescoes of Good and Bad Government in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena.

ing to the left, that is—remembering that Dante is going eastward—from South to North. The leftward flow, however, is doubtless symbolic as usual. It is, as we shall soon learn from Matelda, the River Lethe, and its motion to the left is connected with its function of washing away the very memory of sin. It is probably for the same reason that it flows 'dark dark' (l. 31, *bruna bruna*) under a perpetual shade which neither sun nor moon can pierce: symbolic partly of the darkness of sin, and partly of the darkness of oblivion into which it bears sin away. Its waters flow down to Cocytus, the central sink of Hell; for it is generally identified with the brooklet, which Dante heard but could not see, as he climbed his way back to 'the bright world.' Cato calls it 'the blind river,' in allusion probably to the forgetfulness of sin for which it stands. It is to be noted, however, that sin has no power to stain its waters,—their perfect clearness in which nothing is concealed comes from the pure fountain of Divine grace from which they flow. Its companion river, Eunoë, as we shall see, flows on the other side of the Garden, and refreshes the memory of every good deed.[1]

Lifting his eyes to gaze on 'the great variety of the fresh May flowers' beyond the river, a sudden apparition banished every other thought:

> A lady all alone, who went along
> Singing, and culling flower from flower,
> With which was painted all her way.[2]

It is obviously the fulfilment of the Leah of his morning dream, and he begs her to draw near that he may hear the words of her song. There is a peculiar daintiness and grace about her every movement, like a lady in the dance who 'foot before foot doth scarcely set.' Maiden-like she bends down 'her honest eyes'; and when at last, from the bank opposite, she lifts them, they outshine those of Venus when her own son wounded her

[1] See *Inf.* xxxiv. 127-132; *Purg.* i. 40; xxviii. 28, 124. Contrast the 'bruna bruna' of Lethe with the pale green shadow under which flows the happier stream of Eunoë (*Purg.* xxxiii. 109-111).

[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 40-43. The variety of the flowers is taken by some to represent the varied activities of the life of which Matelda is the symbol.

by accident[1]—by which Dante means that he feels himself in the presence of a new order of love which far surpasses that which had just been burnt out of him so painfully on the Terrace below. When to the light of her eyes she added her smile, Dante hated the three paces of the river which kept them apart as strongly as did Leander the stormy waters of the Hellespont. In other words, her eyes are the 'demonstrations' of whatever truth the lady stands for, and her smile her 'persuasions' of it; and Dante feels that, in spite of all his eager longing, something still hinders him from embracing the higher life of which she is the symbol. The three paces are to be identified, not with the three steps of St. Peter's Gate, confession, contrition, satisfaction, but rather with the three blows with which he smote his breast, when he cast himself at the Angel-Confessor's feet, in acknowledgment of the threefold sin of thought, word and deed.[2] The climb up the Terraces has indeed cleansed him of the sin itself, but the *memory* of it remains, and remains as a paralyzing power. Till those three paces of Lethe are crossed—that is, till its waters have blotted out the very memory of sin in its three forms of thought, word and deed—he feels himself powerless to enter into the life and joy represented by the beautiful lady on the opposite bank. Sin must be not merely forgiven but forgotten, even by the sinner himself.

Who, then, is this lady? The question has given rise to an almost interminable controversy, into which it is impossible to enter at length. To show its intricacy, I take the liberty of quoting Dr. Moore's classification of the various theories:

(i) The Countess Matilda.

(ii) Some Matilda from Germany.

(*a*) The Empress Matilda, wife of the Emperor Henry I.

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 64-66. The reference is to Ovid, *Metam.* x. 525, 526.

[2] *Purg.* ix. 111. Plumptre thinks 'the three steps may indicate the ordeals of shame (Canto xxx. 76-78), confession (Canto xxxi. 34-36), conversion (Canto xxxi. 85-87), which have yet to be passed before Lethe can be crossed.'

(*b*) Matilda of Hackeborn.
(*c*) Matilda of Magdeburg.
(*d*) Matilda, daughter of the Emperor Henry I.

(iii) Some friend or associate of Beatrice.
(*a*) The 'Donna dello schermo' *Vita Nuova*, § 5.
(*b*) The friend of Beatrice in *Vita Nuova*, § 8.
(*c*) The lady mentioned in *Vita Nuova*, § 18.
(*d*) Primavera or Vanna in *Vita Nuova*, § 24.
(*e*) The 'Donna Gentile' of the *Vita Nuova* and *Convito*.

(iv) A purely fictitious symbol, without relation to any real or historical person.[1]

Those who are sufficiently interested may read Dr. Moore's discussion of these theories in the third series of his *Studies in Dante*, pp. 213-216. I entirely agree with his conclusion that 'the Countess Matilda, in accordance with the common opinion, still holds the field.' The chief objection to 'the Great Countess' of Tuscany is that she was an ardent supporter of the Papacy against the Empire. She is best known for the resolution with which she threw all her forces into the field on the side of Hildebrand in the war of investitures which he waged against Henry IV. Her castle of Canossa has become famous as the scene of the Emperor's penance. When she died in 1115 at the age of sixty-nine, she bequeathed to the Church her vast territorial estates for the redemption of her soul and the souls of her parents. This 'celebrated donation,' says Gregorovius, 'one of the most fatal bequests known to history, became the apple of discord of the time, thrown by a woman between the popes and emperors.'[2] At first glance, it certainly seems impossible that an ardent Imperialist like Dante should choose an equally ardent Papalist as the Guardian-Spirit of the forest of just government, or transform, as Gardner says, 'the stern heroine of Canossa into this dainty Botticellian girl.' This argument, however, would equally exclude Cato, the Guardian of the Mountain's base, as she is of its

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, p. 213.
[2] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, iv. 361 (English Translation).

summit, for he was as strong an opponent of Cæsar as she of the Emperor. As to her bequeathing of her possessions to the Church, it is true that Dante was utterly opposed to such endowments, and severely censured Constantine for his 'Donation'; but none the less he admitted him to the Sixth Heaven of Paradise, and gave him credit for his good intention:

> Now knoweth he how the ill, deduced
> From his good deed, not to himself is hurtful
> Although the world thereby may be destroyed.[1]

The truth is, Matelda is a symbol, and Dante did not demand that the symbolic element should run through the entire life and character,—he was content if the one quality he wanted for the purposes of his allegory stood out in sufficient prominence. Cato might be the enemy of Cæsar, but he was the symbol of Liberty. Matelda fought against the Emperor, but where else could Dante find a truer symbol of the Active Life? Her very name—Mechtilde, Battle-might—was appropriate, even if, as Butler thinks, Dante was ignorant of its significance. Her life was one long struggle for the unity of the Church and against what she regarded as the unjustifiable encroachments of the Empire, and her energy, courage and resolution gained her, quite deservedly, the title of 'the Great Countess.' 'This warlike Deborah of the Papacy,' says Gregorovius, 'owing to her practical powers of government, deserves to rank beside the few great queens who at any age have attained renown.' When we remember her fame throughout all Italy and far beyond, the very casualness with which she is named becomes an indirect proof that no other can be meant, just as, to quote Miss Rossetti, 'any "Elizabeth" as barely named in an English poem would be unhesitatingly identified with our great Queen Elizabeth.'[2]

[1] *Par.* xx. 58-60. Comp. *Inf.* xix. 115; *Purg.* xxxii. 124-126 (p. 477); *De Mon.* iii. 10, 13.

[2] *A Shadow of Dante*, p. 184. Scartazzini draws exactly the opposite conclusion from the casualness with which Matelda is named in Canto xxxiii. 119. Since Dante never asks who she is, he infers that she is one whom he knew in the earthly life—perhaps one of the ladies in the *Vita Nuova*—and therefore not to be identified with 'the great Countess' or any other historical personage.

The symbolism of Matelda as the Active Life has been set forth in the beautiful passage quoted from Ruskin in connection with the dream which foretold her; but there are several points which are worth bringing into greater clearness. We have seen that she stands in contrast to the Negligent Rulers in the Valley of the Princes, just as the wide Forest does to the narrow Valley itself. We have also seen that she is the opposite in every respect to the Siren of Dante's second dream, with her stammering tongue and eyes asquint, her distorted feet and maimed hands and unhealthy hue. But she also stands in contrast to her old earthly self. She died at the age of sixty-nine, but the sinless Garden has restored her youth, perhaps in accordance with the teaching of Aquinas that all rise *in ætate juvenili*, the most perfect age, which begins at about thirty years; perhaps too to indicate that for perfect work and for perfect joy in God's work, immortal youth is necessary.[1] Further, all the long war and turmoil of her earthly government is swept away—the quiet woodland glades, the steady wind, the flowers and birds, form a picture and image of what government is in a sinless world: 'the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.'[2] It may be as the reward of her former defence of the Church that it is now her function to guide the soul to it; but we come nearest to Dante's thought if we see in this the important truth that the Active Life, righteous government, and a pure and simple joy in the work of God's hands in Nature, lead to the higher truths of Revelation. It is quite away from the idea to see in Matelda, as Hettinger suggests, a symbol of the priesthood, 'through whose instrumentality we are brought into the Church, the Earthly Paradise.'[3] This identification of the Earthly Paradise with the Church could not possibly have entered Dante's mind.

[1] *Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxxxi. a. 1. On the other hand, Cato's age seems increased. He died at the age of forty-nine, but the impression given by *Purg.* i. 31-36 is that of a much older man.

[2] Isa. xxxii. 17. Righteousness and peace are constantly associated in Scripture.

[3] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 187.

There is just one other point. Miss Rossetti calls attention to the fact that Matelda is 'the only permanent inhabitant' of Eden, but she suggests no reason for this. May it not be Dante's way of indicating the limits of her capacity of blessedness? Had he not seen in her *some* limitation, there is no reason why he should not have set her among the Righteous Rulers of the Sixth Heaven. Obviously he regards her as the highest type of *earthly* activity, but the Celestial Paradise is beyond her. Like the Guardian of the base of the Mount, her fate is to see generation after generation of penitent souls pass on to a higher bliss from which she herself is meantime shut out. Even the highest earthly government is not the final 'kingdom of heaven,' and perhaps, in Dante's opinion, Matelda had no other ideal. At all events, it certainly cannot be without meaning that her blessedness is limited to an Earthly Paradise. In 'the white star' of Jupiter Dante shows us the just kings of every age and land in the form of starry lights spelling out, letter by letter, the opening words of the Book of Wisdom: *Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram*, by which he means that each contributes something to the ideal and eternal Empire, the symbol and standard of which is the imperial eagle which settled on the final M.[1] If he regarded the opposition of the Great Countess to the earthly Empire as her refusal to contribute her share, it would account for his exclusion of her for a time from the celestial Empire of universal righteousness.

It is somewhat strange to find that Matelda's first care is to make a kind of apology for her smile, as if it threw suspicion on her as being out of keeping with the sinless Garden—the place

> 'Elect to human nature for its nest.'

The suspicion can scarcely be, as Benvenuto thinks, that she was 'love-smitten' (*philocapta*), because Dante had addressed her as one who 'warmed herself at the rays of love' (vv. 43, 44). It is rather the reflection of

[1] *Par.* xviii. 70-117.

Dante's own feeling. He and his companions are newcomers, as she says,—too recently arrived to be able yet to enter into the spirit of the place. Dante had just finished a long and exhausting climb, and the anguish of the final fire was too fresh on his soul to let him enter in a moment into the joy of Paradise Regained. The 'three steps' of Lethe lay between—the sad memory of his threefold sin. Perhaps too the Garden itself was so much associated in his mind with the infinite sin and sorrow its loss had caused, that smiles and laughter seemed incongruous, out of place. Matelda explains her joy by the Psalm *Delectasti* which she was singing:

> For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work:
> I will triumph in the works of thy hands.[1]

This joy in the work of *God's* hands is, as we saw, far higher than that of Leah, which was in the work of *her own* hands, and which passed away like a dream. Instead of being inconsistent with the Earthly Paradise, it is precisely that which constitutes its proper blessedness. Sadness involves the loss of God's works, as the souls fixed in the mire at the bottom of the Stygian Fen discovered:

> 'Sad were we
> In the sweet air which by the sun is gladdened,
> Bearing within ourselves the slothful smoke:
> Now are we sad in the black mire.'

Some of this sadness clings to Dante even here, and makes him marvel to see Matelda smile in such a place.[2]

She now offers to answer any question Dante may ask, addressing him as 'thou who art in front.' The order of the three Pilgrims is reversed. Virgil has

[1] Psalm xcii. 4; *Purg.* xxviii. 76-81.

[2] *Inf.* vii. 121-124. Professor Earle takes a very different view. The free talk about love is the sign of the return to a state of perfect innocence. 'This Fair Lady is not any one particular person at all; she is not a woman but Woman. And this will afford the first clue to the part assigned her. As in the history of the Fall the persuasion of Eve had seconded the wiles of the tempter, and seduced Adam from duty, so reversely, in this Eden Regained, Woman is instrumental in promoting the cause of man's happiness and edification.' The weak point of this ingenious view is that it makes the name Matelda more mysterious than ever: why should Dante call Woman in the abstract Matelda? (Introduction to Dr. Shadwell's *Purgatorio*, Part II. xxiv-xxvi).

resigned his office as guide and fallen into the background,—the purified will is a law unto itself. Statius too has dropped behind: as 'a secret Christian' who conformed to Pagan customs, he was neither worthy nor able to guide a soul that made open confession of Christ.[1]

Dante now states his difficulty. If, as Statius had assured him on the Fifth Terrace, neither rain fell nor wind blew higher up the Mountain than St. Peter's Gate,[2] what is the meaning of this flowing river and the sound as of a breeze among the trees of the forest? In reply Matelda explains first the phenomenon of the wind, or what seems such to Dante. God, she says, gave this place to man as 'an earnest of eternal peace,' that is, of the Celestial Paradise for which He had created him. When he fell soon after his creation, the happy Garden which he lost was raised to this great height above all variations of weather, that the storms which rage below the Gate 'might not wage any war against mankind.' The reference seems to be to the upheaval of Mount Purgatory caused by the fall of Satan.[3] From the Gate upward, then, the Mountain stands perfectly free of all atmospheric disturbances. 'The sound of the forest' is due to one steady movement of the Heavens above, not to the ever-veering winds of earth below. This movement originates with 'the primal turning,' that is, the *Primum Mobile*, the Ninth Heaven, which revolves from East to West in twenty-four hours. This inconceivable velocity communicates itself to all the lower spheres, growing less and less rapid as it descends. When it reaches the sphere of air which surrounds the earth, the motion is comparatively slow and gentle; and as the earth itself, according to Dante's astronomy, is stationary, any projection on its surface, such as the great altitude of the Mount, interrupts the revolving air.

Matelda proceeds to explain the growth of the plant-life of Paradise. The holy soil brings forth of itself.

[1] *Purg.* xxii. 90, 91. See p. 303.
[2] *Purg.* xxi. 40 54.
[3] *Inf.* xxxiv. 121-126.

Its plants have such virtue that, when swept by the revolving sphere, they impregnate the air, and this in its circling scatters the seed abroad upon the lower earth. Plants which surprise us by springing up 'without manifest seed' are the gifts of Paradise to the fallen world. Not every seed of 'the holy plain,' however, is thus carried to our earth: no fruit, for example, from the Tree of Life is plucked down here below; but the underlying thought, as Plumptre says, is that 'all truth and goodness in man's present state is but the survival of his primal state, the remnants of a lost blessedness.'[1]

In similar fashion, the water of Paradise has no earthly source—it is fed inexhaustibly by the will of God:

> 'The water which thou seest springs not from a vein
> Restored by vapour which the cold converts,
> Like a river which gains and loses breath;
> But issues from a fountain constant and sure,
> Which by the will of God as much regains
> As it pours forth, open upon two sides.
> Upon this side with virtue it descends,
> Which takes away from men the memory of sin;
> On the other, of every good deed done restores it.
> Here Lethe, as upon the other side
> Eunoë, it is called; and worketh not
> If first on this side and on that it be not tasted.
> This every other savour doth transcend.'[2]

This is Dante's familiar mingling of Scripture and heathen mythology. In the Greek mysteries it seems to have been taught that two rivers flow through Hades —one of Forgetfulness, the other of Memory. Dante transforms both into symbols of the Divine mercy. For the perfect blessedness of the redeemed soul, two things are necessary—forgetfulness of its past sins and the quickening of its memory of former good deeds. Hence from the one fountain of Divine mercy flow forth two rivers: Lethe to the left because it carries away the memory of evil, and Eunoë to the right because it restores the memory of good. The name Eunoë comes from the Greek εὔνοος, 'well-minded,' the stream of 'kindly thoughts,' as one calls it. The flowing of the

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 85-120. [2] *Purg.* xxviii. 121-133.

two rivers from one fountain seems to come from Genesis ii. 6, where the Vulgate reads '*fons* ascendebat e terra,' instead of, as in the English version, 'there went up a *mist* from the earth'; and in Canto xxxiii. 112-114, he seems to identify them symbolically with Euphrates and Tigris.[1] They represent, as already said, the inexhaustible mercy of God, by whose will alone the waters poured forth are perpetually renewed.

There can be no doubt, however, that the symbolism is far from being exhausted by this explanation. We saw when discussing the exposition of Statius of the cessation of changes of weather at St. Peter's Gate, that these changes represent symbolically the fluctuations of sin and temptation. The lower sky is under 'the prince of the power of the air.' The exclusion of these variations from the Earthly Paradise cannot but mean the entire absence of evil. And this gives a peculiar significance to Matelda's joy in the works of God. Down on the fallen earth His works cannot give perfect joy: the shock and dislocation of sin has passed through them, leaving them unsteadfast, insecure, dangerous; and of this the variations of weather are regarded as the symbol.[2] But on this high tableland which stands clear of these fluctuations of sin and passion, the works of God are perfect and give perfect joy. The wind, subject to no 'prince of the power of the air,' is produced by the heavens above, a wind of the Spirit which blows with the constancy of God Himself, draws their virtue from the trees, and carries many a seed of blessing to the sinful world far below. The sacred soil brings forth of itself, without seed, by the direct power of God. The water flows from the fountain of His grace, and is perpetually renewed by His will. No storm causes it

[1] See Dr. Moore's *Studies*, 3rd Series, pp. 136-139. Milton (*Par. Lost*, ii. 570-614) sets Lethe in Hell between the lake of fire and a frozen continent, swept with whirlwind and hail. All the damned are haled from the one to the other that they may feel the 'fierce extremes' of fire and ice. As they cross Lethe, they struggle to reach its waters; but Fate withstands, Medusa guards the ford, and the river itself shrinks from their touch.

[2] Milton also represents the variations of weather as due to the Fall, but differs from Dante in attributing them to Angels, not demons (*Par Lost*, x. 649 ff.).

to overflow; nor any heat of summer to dry up. It is in *these* works of God Matelda rejoices—works that come straight from His own hand, unruined by sin, sure and steadfast in all their movements and operations, carrying peace and joy whithersoever they go. It is for such works as these she sings *Delectasti* with smiles —they restore the 'honest laughter and sweet mirth' which Adam so quickly 'changed to tears and toil.'[1]

It is difficult to understand what Dante says in verses 130-132,—that Lethe does not work unless Eunoë is also tasted. We naturally take this to mean that forgetfulness of sin and remembrance of good deeds keep equal pace, that the good memory is necessary to blot out the bad. Yet in Canto xxxiii. 91-96 we find that Dante himself, *before* tasting Eunoë, has utterly forgotten his unfaithfulness to Beatrice for which she had shortly before made him weep so bitterly, and she has to remind him that he had drunk of Lethe that very day. Dr. Oelsner suggests the explanation that 'the true function of the twofold stream is to sift out evil and sinful memories from the sources of joy and gratitude with which they are often inseparably mixed up on earth.'[2] Perhaps the simpler idea is better, that their function is to prepare the soul for the Celestial Paradise, the blessedness of which is impossible until the good memory is quickened, as well as the bad taken away. The difficulty, however, does not end here. When we turn to the *Paradiso* we find that memory of past sins has not faded *absolutely* from the souls of the redeemed—they are remembered intellectually, but forgotten as experience, to take St. Augustine's distinction. If this were not so, gratitude to God for salvation were impossible. As Folco of Marseilles says after recalling his evil life:

> 'Yet here is no repenting, but we smile,
> Not at the fault, which comes not back to mind,
> But at the Worth which ordered and foresaw.

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[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 94-96. In much of this Dante follows Aquinas, who says the Earthly Paradise is a corporeal place with temperate air and flowers in everlasting bloom (*Summa*, i. q. cii.).

[2] *Purgatorio* (Temple Classics), p. 360.

Here we gaze back into the art which beautifies
Its own so great effect, and we discern the good
Whereby to the world above returns that below.'[1]

This then gives us the sense in which we are to understand the operation of the twofold river: the memory of sin as an experience passes away, but the intellectual memory remains, else there could be no gratitude for salvation; and on the other hand, Eunoë recalls so vividly the good which has come even out of evil, that the pain and sorrow of repentance are swallowed up in an adoring and grateful contemplation of the Divine 'art' which so 'ordered and foresaw' that all things have worked together for good. 'In that City of God,' says St. Augustine, 'there will be free will, one in all and indivisible in each, freed from all evil and filled with all good, enjoying indefectibly the sweetness of eternal bliss, oblivious of sins, oblivious of sufferings, and yet not so oblivious of its deliverance as to be ungrateful to its Deliverer.'[2] Psychologically, it is extremely difficult to conceive of this oblivion of sin, but at least we shall see that Dante did not regard it as a mere magic change, independent of ethical conditions.

To her exposition of the wind and water of the sinless land, Matelda adds 'a corollary for a grace':

'They who in ancient time have feigned in song
The Age of Gold and its estate of happiness,
Perchance in Parnassus of this place did dream.
Here the root of the human race was innocent;
Here Spring is evermore, and every fruit;
This is the nectar of which each one speaks.'[3]

Turning to his poets, he found them smiling with pleasure at this 'last interpretation,' the fulfilment of their dream. The chief reference is probably to the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil, by which Statius was 'lighted on to God.' As we have so often seen, Dante regards

[1] *Par.* ix. 103-108.

[2] *City of God*, xxii. 30. Aquinas says: 'Although charity is now (*i.e.* in the present life) a cause of grieving for sin, yet the saints in the Fatherland (*in patria*) will be so flooded with joy, that grief can have no place in them: and so they will not grieve for sins, but rather rejoice in the Divine mercy by which they have been released from their sins' (*Summa*, iii. *Suppl.* q. lxxxvii. a. 1).

[3] *Purg.* xxviii. 139-147.

many heathen myths as unconscious foregleams, or perhaps echoes, of the truths of Revelation.[1] This is his way of acknowledging his debt to his guides, and in particular to Virgil, who has led him to the true Paradise, of which he himself could only dream. 'There is an infinite pathos,' says Plumptre, 'in the smile of Virgil.' This momentary glimpse of the true Age of Gold is all his share of it. But at least when he returns to the green enamel of the meadow in the hemisphere of light, he will be able to tell his brother-poets of the Divine Forest which is the fulfilment of their ancient dream. For himself, Dante feels that these poetic visions of the natural reason are past; he must now address himself to the Active Life which converts them into reality:

Then to the fair Lady I turned my face.

[1] *E.g.* Lactantius (*Div. Institutes*, Bk. vii. ch. xxiv.) quotes *Ecl.* iv. 21-45 as a prophecy of the renewal of the earth.

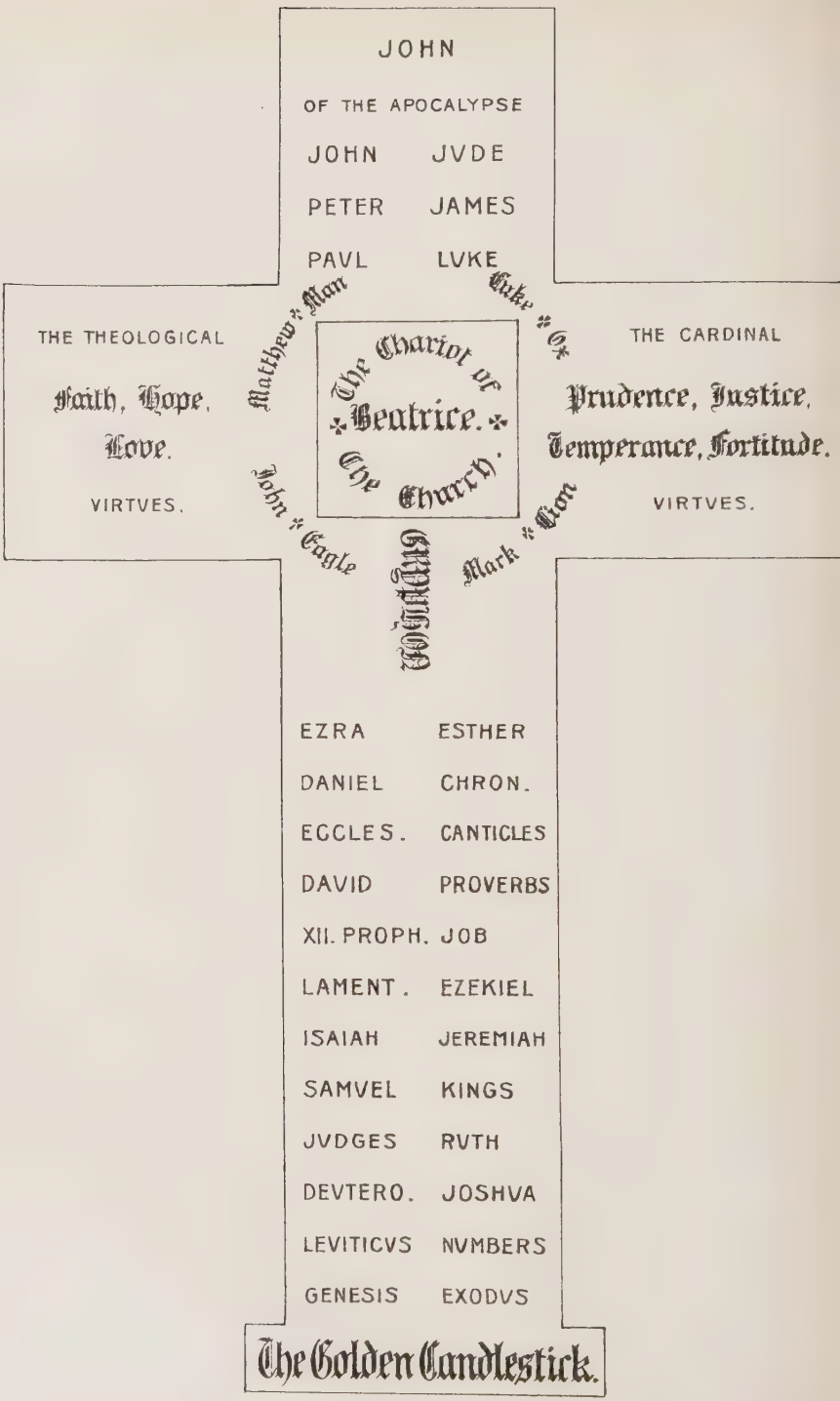

DIAGRAM OF PROCESSION OF THE SPIRIT.

NOTE ON THE FORM OF THE PROCESSION IN CANTO XXIX

The diagram on the opposite page is drawn from the following note by Alessandro Vellutelli: 'The poet has described this new church in the form of a cross, and turned to the West, as all churches are wont to be built, because he has put first the seven candlesticks, which make the foot of the cross, then four-and-twenty elders two and two, which make the rest of the first wood as far as to the other which crosses it, and here he has put instead of this intersection the group, that is, the car drawn by the Gryphon in the midst of four animals, and instead of the right part of the wood which crosses, he has put the three, and instead of the left the four ladies in the dance. Then instead of the part at the top he has put the seven who are arrayed as the first company' (*i.e.* as the four-and-twenty elders).

There can be no doubt that this form is deliberate and intentional. Dante arranged the great Procession of Revelation throughout the ages in the shape of a cross to indicate its connection with the Crucifixion; indeed, if we except the red garlands of the New Testament writers, it is the only way in which the sacrifice of Christ is recognized in the pageant. In arranging the four-and-twenty elders I have followed as closely as possible Jerome's order of the books of Scripture. The appeal which the diagram makes to the eye will, I hope, throw light on the exposition given in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXV

The Procession of the Spirit

The remaining five Cantos are occupied with one of the most sustained and manifold pieces of symbolism in literature; and for this reason it is perhaps that part of the poem which appeals least to our modern taste. Even so accomplished a Dante student as Mr. Symonds pronounces it artistically a failure. 'The difficulty of identifying all the personages who play parts in it, and the dryness of the abstract imagery, overtax the attention of readers accustomed to greater freedom and directness of poetical presentation. . . . The whole passage is one of the least interesting and least imperishable portions of his poem. Here more than elsewhere the poet belongs to an age, and not to all time. Here more than elsewhere his work is archaic, mediæval, obsolete in style.'[1] There is some truth in this criticism; but it will be felt, I think, greatly to overshoot the mark, if we make a serious effort to place ourselves, as near as may be, at Dante's point of view. After all, it must never be forgotten that the chief purpose of the poem is ethical and religious. Dante is first of all trying to tell us as clearly as he can a great experience of his own soul; and since he also stands for mankind, if we can pierce through the symbolic veil to the experience itself, we may find that its appeal is wider and more level to the general heart of man than a first reading might lead us to suppose.

For the right understanding of the Earthly Paradise knowledge of two things is absolutely essential: first,

[1] *Introduction to the Study of Dante*, p. 124.

its relation to the general scheme of the whole poem; and second, its place in the evolution of Dante's religious experience. To bring out the former, let us see briefly the contents of these five Cantos. They fall into three divisions:

I. A great Procession passes before Dante's eyes. It is usually called the Triumph of the Church; but, for reasons to be afterwards stated, I prefer to call it the Procession of the Spirit. The Church has, indeed, a place in it, and even a central place; nevertheless, the leading idea is that of Revelation (Cantos xxix.-xxx. 33).

II. On the Chariot of the Church there descends the figure of Beatrice, who represents neither the Church nor Ecclesiastical Authority as such, but the Divine Wisdom of Revelation, without which man cannot ascend from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly. Before the bar of this Divine Wisdom Dante is arraigned and convicted, and, after due sorrow and confession, so purified that he is ready 'to mount unto the stars' (Cantos xxx. —xxxi.; xxxiii. 103-145).

III. Between his conviction and purification, a series of seven visions passes before his eyes in which he sees the decline and fall of the Church from the ideal form in which her Lord left her, to her Babylonish captivity in Avignon. Beatrice as the personification of Revealed Wisdom remains, and foretells the coming of a Deliverer. These visions are given partly for Dante's own religious education, and partly as a Divine message which he is to carry back to the world, a new revelation of which he is the elect prophet (Cantos xxxii.-xxxiii. 102).

It would be a mistake to regard these as three isolated episodes, without any inner connection with one another. They are all held together in Dante's mind by the conception of Divine Revelation: even what seems a mere personal episode between him and

Beatrice is in reality a result of the great Procession of the Spirit. In short, the importance of the Earthly Paradise is this—that it represents the second of the three great stages by which the soul grows in the knowledge of God which is its final beatitude. These stages are stated in an important passage of the *Contra Gentiles* of Aquinas, a passage which forms undoubtedly the theological framework of the entire *Commedia*. It begins thus: 'There is a threefold knowledge that man may have of divine things. The first is an ascent through creatures to the knowledge of God by the natural light of reason.' This obviously corresponds to the part of his pilgrimage Dante has just finished: Virgil, 'the natural light of reason' has shown him the fruits of sin and the process of purification; and there his guidance fails,—something beyond man's natural powers must now meet the soul by way of supernatural revelation. The passage proceeds: 'The second is a descent of divine truth by revelation to us; truth exceeding human understanding; truth accepted, not as demonstrated to sight, but as orally delivered for belief.' Nothing surely could better describe the descent of Beatrice than these words: Dante simply turns them into visible symbolic form. The natural reason having ascended as far as it can 'through creatures,' it is met by 'a descent of divine truth by revelation.' This is the stage of faith, faith being with Aquinas belief, the intellectual acceptance of things revealed which lie beyond our power to discover.[1] It is not the highest stage. It corresponds to *hearing*,[2] whereas the final knowledge corresponds to *sight*: 'The third is an elevation of the human mind to a perfect insight into things revealed.' It is obvious that this final stage is repre-

[1] This statement, however, must not be misunderstood. Aquinas did not conceive of belief as a bare intellectual acceptance. He defines a believer as one who 'thinks with *assent*.' 'The intellect of the believer is not finally determined by reason, but by the will; and therefore *assent* here is taken for an act of the intellect as determined by the will.' It involves, therefore, a moral element, and this element is fundamental (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. ii. a. 1).

[2] Rom. x. 17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'—*i.e.* Revelation.

sented by the Celestial Paradise. The *Paradiso* shows us the soul penetrating deeper and ever deeper into the beauty of Beatrice, the Spirit of Revelation, until it reaches the Beatific Vision.[1]

This, then, is what I have called the theological framework of the *Commedia* from beginning to end: *Reason*, ascending 'through creatures'; *Faith*, welcoming Revelation as it descends out of heaven from God; and *Sight*, penetrating by contemplation to the final meanings of the things revealed. This being so, the Earthly Paradise is no mere excrescence, marring the symmetry and beauty of the poem, as it often seems to be on a first reading, or even a second. We may not agree with the theological scheme, but at all events this is an organic part of it. Professor Earle is not far from the truth when he says that for Dante himself these closing Cantos were the 'hub' of his great poem. 'Hither converge all the leading and pervading ideas, as the spokes of a wheel converge about the axle-tree.'[2] Certainly in Dante's theology there could have been no Paradiso for the soul of man without that Procession of the books of Scripture and the descent of Beatrice as the personified spirit of the whole; for the simple reason that the very meaning of Paradise is perfect insight into the things thus supernaturally revealed. Nay further, it is just here we find the reason for 'the continuously symbolic nature' of these Cantos, which is

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, iv. 1 (Father Rickaby's Translation). The idea is reproduced in a passage of the *De Monarchia* (iii. 16), of which this Canto is but the symbolic form. After speaking of the two beatitudes for which man is made (the Earthly Paradise and the Heavenly), Dante proceeds: 'But to these different kinds of blessedness, as to different conclusions, we must come by different means. For at the first we may arrive by the lessons of philosophy, if only we will follow them, by acting in accordance with the moral and intellectual virtues. But at the second we can only arrive by spiritual lessons, transcending human reason, so that we follow them in accordance with the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity. The truth of the first of these conclusions and of these means is made manifest by human reason, which by the philosophers has been all laid open to us. The other conclusions and means are made manifest by the Holy Spirit, who by the mouth of the Prophets and holy writers, and by Jesus Christ, the co-eternal Son of God, and His disciples, has revealed to us supernatural truth of which we have great need' (Church's Translation).

[2] *Introduction* to Dr. Shadwell's *Purgatory*, Pt. ii. p. xiv.

so great a stumbling-block to many readers. It indicates, and is meant to indicate, the sense of mystery with which the truths of revelation surround the soul when the natural reason first meets them: they are as the shadow to the substance. As Aquinas says in his exposition of the passage quoted above, the 'few points that are revealed to us are set forth under similitudes and obscurities of expression, so as to be accessible only to the studious.'[1]

There remains one very interesting question, almost never touched upon, namely, why should this Procession of Revelation appear in the Earthly Paradise at all? There is a sense of incongruity, as of something foreign to its sylvan loveliness, something almost artificial breaking in on the peace and sanctity of Nature. The incongruity does not lessen if we turn to the symbolic sense. This Earthly Paradise is Eden. The long and painful climb from Terrace to Terrace has simply undone the Fall, and restored to man the natural virtues which he lost by sin. But obviously it is Paradise Regained—with a difference. Had there been no Fall, there would have been no necessity for the Church as a visible organized institution, or for the long Procession of Scriptural writers which Dante sees here. More important still, it is a question whether there would have been an Incarnation of God such as is symbolized in the Gryphon that draws the Chariot of the Church.[2] This was one of the great subjects of debate between the scholastics of the Middle Ages; and the decision of Dante's master in theology is that 'although God might have been incarnate if sin had not existed, yet it is said

[1] Compare St. Bernard: 'If faith be a shadow yet it is good, for it tempers the Light to our weak and darkened eyes, and prepares them for its brilliance; for it is written: *Purifying their hearts by faith* (Acts xv. 9). Faith, then, does not extinguish the light, but preserves it. Whatever that be, and however great, which is open to the vision of an angel, the shadow of faith preserves for me; wraps it, as it were, in an ample and trusty bosom, to be revealed to me in due time. Is it not better for you to possess, though in a shrouded and hidden state, that which if uncovered and bare you would not be capable of grasping' (Sermon xxxi. on Canticles, Eales' Translation).

[2] It is assumed meantime that the Gryphon represents Christ. The question is discussed in pp. 417-424.

more fittingly that if man had not sinned God would not have been incarnate, since in Holy Scripture the ground of the Incarnation is everywhere set down as springing from the sin of the first man.'[1] According to this view, the Procession as Dante saw it could have no place in Eden apart from a Fall. The absence of the Gryphon would have rendered superfluous both the sacred writers and the Chariot of the Church. That this was in Dante's mind is proved from a passage from the *De Monarchia* (iii. 4) already quoted: 'If man had remained in the state of innocence in which he was made by God he would have had no need of such directive regimens [as Church and Empire]. Such regimens, then, are remedial against the infirmity of sin.' Elsewhere Aquinas teaches that prior to sin Adam's knowledge included not merely things which can be known by the natural powers, but also those things which lie beyond, which are necessary to guide human life to a supernatural end, and which can be known by sinful creatures only by revelation and faith.[2] The Procession therefore is no part of the original Garden of Eden: though Dante has climbed his way back to it, the infirmity which sin has left in his nature renders necessary that great movement of supernatural revelation of which Christ in his twofold nature is the centre.

The relation of the Earthly Paradise to Dante's personal experience need not detain so long. While it is, indeed, true that Dante sustains in the poem a representative character as Man, it is nevertheless equally true that this representative character is never without

[1] *Summa*, iii. q. i. a. 3. On this subject there are two leading types of theology—the Thomist and the Scotist. Duns Scotus held that while the principal purpose of the Incarnation is to save sinners, yet it would have taken place even if there had been no Fall. The whole question is carefully discussed by the late Bishop Westcott in his essay on 'The Gospel of Creation' in his commentary on *The Epistles of St. John*. As the title of the essay implies, he supports the Scotist view.

[2] *Summa*, i. q. xciv. a. 3. Somewhat strangely, Aquinas attributes a certain knowledge of the Incarnation to Adam in his sinless state: 'Before the state of sin man had an explicit faith in the incarnation of Christ, in so far as it was ordained to the consummation of glory, but not in so far as it was ordained to the liberation from sin by the passion and resurrection, since man had no foreknowledge of future sin' (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. ii. a. 7).

some basis in his own individual life. In the present case that personal basis is the way in which the truth of Revelation first came home to him, revealing himself to himself: touched the springs of memory, woke in him a poignant and unexpected grief for the lost ideal of his youth, and finally gave him the blessed peace of forgetfulness. And step for step with this, Revelation revealed new aspects of its meaning and its beauty: not indeed its Divinest aspects—they are reserved for the Celestial Paradise; but those which are appropriate to an Earthly Paradise, and to that righteous union of temporal and spiritual governments for which it stands.

Bearing in mind, then, this personal basis of experience, let us now proceed with the exposition. Matelda, after her 'corollary' of the Sinless Garden and the Age of Gold, sang 'like an enamoured lady' the words: '*Beati, quorum tecta sunt peccata*'—'Blessed are they whose sins are covered.'[1] It is only at this point therefore that we reach the fourth element of the Sacrament of Penance, namely, Absolution. Ever since Dante arrived at the Gate of St. Peter, he has been engaged with the other three—Confession, Contrition, Satisfaction, and especially the last. On the Seven Terraces he made the Satisfaction of painful discipline by which he offered what amends he could to the broken law of God, and gave proof of the sincerity of his repentance. According to his conception of Penance, Absolution was not given until Satisfaction was made; it is therefore only now, when the penitential discipline is completed, that he can know the blessedness of the man whose sins are covered, and covered not merely from God, but even from himself. The very memory of them must be blotted out, else there could be no Paradise for him. Hence it is that Beatrice arraigns him sternly and compels him to face the full meaning of his sin, before she will allow him to drink one drop of forgiveness and forgetfulness. Once, in the course of the arraignment, as we shall see, he was tempted to 'cover' his sin in a false and unworthy way, but she sternly refused to

[1] Ps. xxxii. 1.

allow such self-deception. There is no way of covering sin but by uncovering it, by facing the full enormity of its guilt.[1]

The first step toward this, according to Dante, is the setting of one's sins in the light of Revelation as it is contained in Scripture; and he proceeds to tell us how he personally came into the presence of that light. I say 'personally,' for while this is true for all men, the form in which he here states it is that supplied by his own experience. Matelda follows up her song of forgiveness by moving up the river of Lethe against the current, while Dante keeps abreast of her, 'little step with little step attending.' The number of the steps is important for our purpose:

> Not a hundred were there between her steps and mine,
> When the banks in equal measure gave a bend,
> In such fashion that to the East I turned me;[2]

and there, coming from that holy direction, Dante caught his first glance of the great revealing light of Scripture. Now, it is quite impossible that the steps have no meaning. Not a hundred between him and Matelda is, of course, less than fifty, and since they are 'little steps,' I take them to be years. In plain words, Dante has to go up the stream of Time for a space of nearly fifty years in order to see the light of Revelation in Holy Scripture. This is a fairly definite date, and counting from 1300 brings us not quite so far back as 1250. Was there, then, any historical event, or series of events, which would justify this interpretation? I think there was. It was in the year 1257 that Aquinas and Bonaventura received their Doctor's degree in Paris and began to teach in the University there. When we remember Dante's constant reliance on the theology of the former, and the position he assigns to both in the Sun, the Heaven of Theologians,[3] it may well have seemed to him that to these men he owed his first real knowledge of the truths of Revelation. One even ventures to think that the reference is still

[1] See note on the Sacrament of Penance, p. 31.
[2] *Purg.* xxix. 10-12.
[3] *Par.* x-xiii.

more definite. A passage from the *Summa contra Gentiles* has been already quoted as giving the theological framework of the *Commedia*. This was the first work of Aquinas, and is believed to contain the substance of his lectures in Paris. Its thesis corresponds exactly with the stage Dante has now reached in the Earthly Paradise, regarded as the meeting-place of Virgil and Beatrice, Reason and Revelation. Aquinas aims at showing that, while their spheres are distinct, there is no contradiction between the two; and there is nothing incredible in the idea that in leading forth the Procession of Revelation here in the presence of Virgil, Dante was thinking specifically of the Fourth Book of the *Contra Gentiles*: 'Of God in His Revelation,' in which St. Thomas sums up the discussion. At all events, some such view as this would give a natural interpretation to the not quite fifty 'little steps,' and one which fits in with what we know of the sources of Dante's theology; it would be his way of acknowledging his indebtedness to these theologians for his insight into the truths of Revelation. Further, this would help to decide the meaning of the two wheels on which the Chariot of the Church moves. The question must be examined later on; it is enough meantime to say that I regard them as St. Francis and St. Dominic, not simply in themselves, but as representing two great types of theology, Love and Wisdom.[1]

We come now to the Procession; and one of the most important things to notice is the gradual growth of Dante's knowledge of the truth of Revelation — a growth, indeed, which continues to the last Canto of the *Paradiso*. His first sight of it is a sudden brightness, which he might have mistaken for lightning had it not remained and increased in clearness. But even thus vague as it was, so sweet a melody ran through the luminous air that he was indignant with Eve for having deprived him of it so long.[2] His words are

[1] See pp. 413-416.

[2] Contrast this first sweet music of Revelation with his fear afterwards of the sword of the Word in the hand of St. Paul (Canto xxix. 139-141).

chosen carefully in order to bring out the 'hardihood' of her sin:

> Who there, where earth and heaven obeyed,
> A woman alone, and but just formed,
> Bore not to stay 'neath any veil.

In other words, the aggravations of her sin are such things as these: she was the one discordant note in the universe, she broke the obedient harmony of heaven and earth—she, 'a woman,' and therefore created for obedience; 'alone,' and therefore with no excuse of companionship in evil; 'but just formed,' that is, sinning at the earliest opportunity; and refusing 'to stay 'neath any veil' of creaturely ignorance, not content to wait humbly upon God's time and manner of revelation, but resolved to be herself a god 'knowing good and evil.'[1] Dante saw in this intellectual pride which irreverently tears down the veil from the secret things which belong to God, the source of the world's ignorance of Divine things. It is precisely because Eve would not 'remain 'neath any veil' that the veil darkened, and the supernatural truths which would have come by intuition come now only by revelation under the dim types and shadows of faith. Dante humbly prays for the help of Urania, the Muse of heavenly things, by the fastings, cold and vigils he has endured for the sake of 'the holy Virgins,'—the principal allusion being doubtless to the toils he had undergone in his study of Theology, toils which would have been unnecessary but for Eve's presumption.[2]

The first vague brightness now resolves itself into a sevenfold form, which in the distance seemed seven trees

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 25-27. Matelda is solitary in her obedience as Eve in her disobedience. Adam managed to resist sin for a little over six hours (*Par.* xxvi. 139-142), Eve fell within the hour of her creation. In *Summa*, ii-ii. q. clxiii. a. 4, Aquinas discusses the relative guilt of Adam and Eve. Comp. 1 Tim. ii. 14.

[2] Mr. Symonds thinks this invocation of Urania shows that Dante regarded this pageant of Scripture as 'among the highest flights of his imagination.' This is a total misunderstanding. The reason is that sin has darkened the heavenly truth of which he is about to speak, and that therefore without the aid of the Muse of heavenly things he will be powerless to see them at all. The pageant in fact is part of the cloud—the shadow and symbol in which truth hides itself from sinful man.

of gold, but on nearer approach was seen to be a seven-branched golden candlestick. Dante is able also to distinguish in the chant the sound of '*Osanna*': once long ago in a dream he had heard the Angels sing '*Osanna in excelsis*,' as they carried the soul of Beatrice to Heaven,[1] and now the word comes back to him when she is about to return. This is the second stage in Dante's insight into Revelation. The candlestick represents the Spirit of God in His unity, and the seven branches with their lamps the sevenfold power by which he inspires men with the knowledge of the truths of Revelation.[2] They correspond to the 'seven lamps of fire' in the Apocalypse (iv. 5) which are 'the seven Spirits of God': St. John saw them 'burning before the throne'; here Dante sees them descended to the world, and even veiling their burning light for its salvation. He compares their brightness to that of the moon 'in the serene of midnight in her mid month.' At first the comparison surprises us—we expect the sun; but Dante means us to understand that Revelation was as yet only as a moon to him, though a moon at its brightest. In plain words, God tempered His light to the weakness of his sinful eyes.[3] In the Tenth Heaven God reveals Himself as a point of burning ineffable light;[4] but here Dante can bear nothing brighter than the moon—some indirect reflection of the Eternal Sun. Even this reflection is beyond the understanding of the natural Reason: Dante turns to Virgil, only to find him as bewildered as himself. Meantime the Procession moved toward them more slowly than new-wedded brides, probably to indicate the mysterious slowness with which the Revelation of God has advanced throughout the ages. Dante is so completely absorbed in the sevenfold spirit that Matelda has to chide him:

> 'Wherefore dost thou burn only
> Thus at the appearance of the living lights,
> And dost not look at what comes after them?'[5]

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[1] *Vita Nuova*, xxiii.
[2] Rev. i. 12, 20.
[3] See *Purg.* xxx. 1-3.
[4] *Par.* xxviii. 16.
[5] *Purg.* xxix. 61-63.

'What comes after' is the Procession of the books of Scripture; and this tells us the meaning of Matelda's question. It touches a weakness which Dante recognizes in his own nature, namely, a tendency to become too deeply absorbed in the more abstract and speculative aspects of Revelation. In the present case it takes the form of an eager curiosity to penetrate into the secret of the Spirit and to discriminate too nicely His sevenfold power, to the neglect of the historical revelation of that power in the books of Scripture. Another instance occurs soon after, when Dante gazes in the eyes of Beatrice so long that the theological virtues rouse him with the words—'Too fixed.'[1] It is perhaps a touch of that weakness which he denounced in Eve—the tendency to pry into the mysteries of God. It is not without meaning that here it is Matelda who recalls him. As symbol of the Active Life, her sympathies are with action more than contemplation; and at this stage in Dante's spiritual growth it is necessary to say in effect: 'Do not lose yourself in the mere abstract power of the Divine Spirit: it is more important for you meantime to see what that power has already done in the history of the world, the concrete revelation of it in the books of Scripture.'

We come now, therefore, to the third stage in Dante's knowledge of Revelation—the Procession of the books of Scripture, with Christ and His Church as the heart and centre of it. Before entering on the exposition, it may be well to get the Procession itself clearly and visibly before our minds. It is headed, as we have just seen, by the Candlestick which represents the Divine Spirit as the source of Revelation. From His seven lamps seven streamers of coloured light float away to the rear beyond Dante's sight; and under this sky of the sevenfold gift of the Spirit, there march figures which represent the entire range of Sacred Scripture. Immediately behind the Candlestick walk four-and-twenty elders two and two abreast, clad in purest

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 1-9. Another instance is *Par.* xxiii. 70-75, where Beatrice rebukes him for gazing in her face to the neglect of the Virgin and Apostles.

white and crowned with fleur-de-lys, the four-and-twenty books of the Old Testament, according to the arrangement and enumeration of St. Jerome. These are followed by the Chariot of the Church, drawn by a Gryphon, half-lion, half-eagle, symbol of Christ in His twofold nature and government. The Chariot moves forward upon two wheels: off the right, dance three ladies, the three theological virtues; off the left, the four natural virtues in the form of nymphs. At the four corners of the Chariot move the Four Gospels in their recognized symbolic forms of Man, Ox, Lion and Eagle, and all crowned with green leaves. The rear-guard is composed of seven men: six walking two and two abreast, while the last comes on alone. They represent the remaining books of the New Testament, clothed in white like their brethren of the Old, but, unlike them, crowned with roses and red flowers.[1]

Such is the great vision of Scripture as it passes before Dante's eyes. It reminds us of the solemn processions of saints which still look down upon us from the mosaics of Ravenna, as they did upon him. Every detail is, of course, symbolic; and since there is almost endless controversy over the interpretation, we must be prepared for difficulties. The immediate effect on Dante, however, is plain enough—a clearer vision of his own evil. The light of the Candlestick and the pure white robes of the four-and-twenty elders shone on the water of Lethe so brightly that when he looked into it he saw his *left* side, which was next it, as in a mirror. In plain words, the light of Scripture—even of Old Testament Scripture, for nothing else has yet come into view—begins to reveal his sin in the mirror of memory, for this is obviously what Lethe represents so long as he is on the left side of it. The very condition of 'forgetting the things which are behind' is to see them clearly in the revealing light of God.

The reason why Scripture has this revealing power is to be found in the seven streamers which float back from the 'seven Spirits of God' over the whole

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 43-150.

Procession. They represent the seven 'gifts of the Spirit,' as named in the Vulgate of Isaiah xi. 2, 3, namely, Wisdom, Intellect, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord.[1] In the *Convito* (iv. 21), Dante points out that their unity is in Love: 'And because these gifts come from ineffable Love, and the Divine Love is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, they are thence called gifts of the Holy Spirit.'[2] Their division is one of the necessary accommodations of Revelation to human sin and infirmity: the white light of truth has to be broken up into its parts. The colours are those 'of which the sun makes his bow and Delia her girdle,' *i.e.*, the rainbow and the lunar halo. The first reference, of course, is to 'the many-coloured wisdom of God.'[3] But it is just in such subtle hints as these that Dante indicates the secret undercurrents of his thought. We shall see in the sequel that the one great subject of Revelation in this Earthly Paradise is the true Divinely ordained relation between Church and Empire. Now, the Church claimed to be the sun from which the moon, the symbol of the Empire, derives its light; and for any one who remembers the discussion of the subject in the *De Monarchia* (iii. 4), it is difficult to believe that the present passage is not Dante's way of declaring that both alike receive their light from God: the sun makes his bow and the moon her girdle of the selfsame colours that stream from the seven lamps which are the seven Spirits of

[1] There are many other interpretations. Landino's is interesting. The seven candlesticks are the seven gifts of the Spirit as above. 'In sign of which the Church holds the seven sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, Orders, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Extreme Unction, and these are the banners, or as we would call them bands, which follow in the figure of smoke behind the candlesticks, and were greater, that is, were extended further in length, than the sight of the poet, to show that the operations, which the seven sacraments work in us, are incomprehensible. And those on the outside were distant from one another ten paces, which signify the ten commandments given by God upon the Mount to Moses, because without the observance of these, the seven gifts, and the seven sacraments, would be in vain.'

[2] See Aquinas, *Summa*, i-ii. q. lxviii. a. 5.

[3] Eph. iii. 10. *ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ*. The idea of colour is dropped out in the Vulgate, as also in the English version: '*multiformis* sapientia Dei,' 'the *manifold* wisdom of God.'

God. In short, it is in a figure what is argued without figure in the *De Monarchia*, that Church and Empire, sun and moon, alike derive their light, and therefore their authority, direct from God.

Dante proceeds to tell us the length and breadth of the many coloured banners:

> The standards to the rearward greater were
> Than was my sight; and, far as I could judge,
> Ten paces were the outermost apart.

The length is not difficult to understand. Dante has no idea that the sevenfold gift of the Spirit ends with the books of Scripture: the many-coloured wisdom stretches far down the generations beyond his vision. The breadth is not so easy to explain. If we adopt the common view that the ten paces are the ten commandments, the idea will be that the entire revelation of the Spirit flows within the bounds of the Divine Law. One cannot help wondering, however, whether the breadth does not refer, as it were, to *space*, as we have seen that the length does to *time*. The stream of Revelation flowed forth over a comparatively narrow portion of the human race—the elect nation of Israel, and, in Dante's regard, the equally elect Roman people. We know that this apparent narrowness of Revelation was a great perplexity to Dante, omitting as it did such men as Virgil—'gente di molto valore'—whose only fault was ignorance of what was not made known to them. Dante cannot explain: he can only accept the limit in faith that the Divine wisdom cannot err: its breadth is represented by 'the perfect number' ten,[1] it covers perfectly that portion of the race which is necessary for the fulfilment of God's mysterious purpose of salvation.

We come now to the four-and-twenty elders, who advanced 'under so fair a sky.' As we saw, they represent the books of the Old Testament as grouped and numbered by St. Jerome.[2] At this point it becomes

[1] *Vita Nuova*, xxx.

[2] Jerome in his *Prologus Galeatus*, gives twenty-two books, corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet: five of Moses, eight of the Prophets, and nine of the Hagiographa. Some, he says, add *Ruth* and *Lamentations* to the Hagiographa, thus making twenty-four,

necessary to say something of the symbolism of colour which pervades the entire passage. All the sacred writers, Old Testament and New, are robed in purest white. It is the symbolic colour of Faith. We must remember that the scholastic idea of faith is not so much the heart's trust in God as the mind's belief in the mysteries of Revelation; and it is this intellectual belief, symbolized by the exceeding whiteness of their garments, which fitted them to become the channels of Revelation to the world. The elders are also crowned with the white blossoms of the fleur-de-lys, and this is commonly taken as a repetition of the idea of faith, according to the words: 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises.'[1] Doubtless this is true; but when stated in this general way, it misses precisely the point Dante wishes to emphasize, namely, the special object of their faith. To see this, let us listen to their chant:

> They all of them were singing: 'Blessed thou
> Among the daughters of Adam, and blessed
> Be thy beauties unto all eternity!'[2]

The first and natural impression is surely that this is a paraphrase of the salutation of the Angel and of Elizabeth to Mary: 'Blessed art thou among women.' To refer it to Beatrice, as is commonly done, is scarcely legitimate exegesis, unless no meaning exists which will naturally fit the Virgin. Such a meaning, however, is quite plainly indicated by the fact that the elders are crowned with the Virgin's flower, the white fleur-de-lys. It stands for faith, of course, but not faith in some vague general sense. The distinctive mark of Old Testament faith is that it looked forward to the Incarnation; and the most natural interpretation of this passage is that the elders chant the praise of her through whom it was to take place, and wear on their brows the white flower of her purity. After giving the

which he expressly identifies with the four-and-twenty elders of the Apocalypse. Jerome relegates the Apocryphal Books to an inferior place, although in his later writings he sometimes quotes them along with Scripture.

[1] Heb. xi. 13.

[2] *Purg.* xxix. 85-87.

Virgin as the first example of the virtue of every Terrace all up the Mountain, it would certainly be strange to ignore her entirely upon the top. As if to put this interpretation past doubt, Dante expressly calls attention to the contrast between the garlands of the Old Testament writers and of the New:

> And these seven like unto the first band
> Were habited; but of lily-flowers
> Around their heads they made no thicket;
> Rather of roses and other flowers vermilion.
> At little distance would the sight have sworn
> That they were all on fire above the eyebrows.[1]

This garland again is usually understood as the evangelical virtue of Love in a general sense, of which red is the symbolic colour. But Dante means something much more specific. These New Testament writers are looking back on that to which the others looked forward. Not the birth of Christ, but His *death*, is their great theme: hence they are crowned with a very 'thicket' of red flowers in token of that Love which made the supreme surrender, shedding its blood and pouring out its soul unto death, for us men and our salvation. The white lilies look forward to the manger, the red roses backward to the Cross.[2]

The four-and-twenty elders passed on, leaving an open space of grass and flowers opposite where Dante stood —an obvious reference to the interval between the close of the Old Testament Scriptures and the opening

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 145-150. I have translated *brolo* in l. 147 'thicket' in accordance with Dr. Moore's note on the word in his *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, pp. 216-218. His conclusion is: 'I believe Dante's idea is not the brilliant garden-like look of the flowers of which he is speaking (as the passage is often explained), but their bushiness and abundance and thicket-like aspect. The later figures in the procession had a perfect thicket or forest of rosy flowers about their heads.'

[2] The word 'rose' confirms this view. Mary is 'the Rose Divine in which the Word became incarnate.' Hence the rose is worn by New Testament writers because the Incarnation is past. We may compare the *rosary*, which is thought by some to mean originally Mary's *rose-garden*—an arrangement of beads divided into three 'chaplets,' each containing five subjects of contemplation from the life of our Lord: five joyful mysteries of His childhood, five sorrowful mysteries of His Passion, five glorious mysteries of His Resurrection and Ascension. The rose implies, therefore, that the Incarnation is now an accomplished fact.

of the New. Then the four Evangels advanced in the symbolic form of animals:

> Even as light after light in heaven followeth,
> There came soon after them four animals,
> Crowned each of them with leaves of green.
> Every one was feathered with six wings,
> The feathers full of eyes; and the eyes of Argus,
> If they were living, would be such.[1]

To spare his rhymes, Dante refers the reader to the vision in the first Chapter of Ezekiel, where he will find the animals described exactly as he saw them, with the one exception that he follows the Apocalypse of St. John in giving them six wings instead of four.[2] From this it appears that Dante saw the four living creatures not, as the Apostle saw them, in the form of separate animals, but in the strange composite shape given them by Ezekiel: 'As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle'—'*above*,' adds the Vulgate, *desuper*, the eagle's head crowning the whole figure as in the tetramorph which Mrs. Jameson reproduces from the mosaics of Mount Athos.[3] It is possible that Dante preferred this composite form as symbolic of the essential unity of the four aspects of our Lord which the four animals were taken to represent. From the second century they stood for the four Evangelists. 'Commonly Matthew is supposed to be signified by the man, since he begins with the human origin of Christ; Mark by the lion, on account of the "voice of one crying" in the desert, at the opening of his gospel; Luke by the ox, the beast offered in sacrifice, since he sets out with the history of the priest Zacharias; John by the eagle, because he wings his flight at once beyond all created things to the contemplation of the eternal Word.'[4] By taking

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 91-96. [2] Rev. iv. 6-8.

[3] *Sacred and Legendary Art*, i. 136.

[4] *Catholic Dictionary*, 'Evangelists.' The symbolism seems to date from the second or third century, though different writers apportion the animals in various ways. Dante must have been familiar with it on the

Ezekiel's composite form, Dante may have meant to emphasize the inner harmony of these four aspects of the life and work of Christ. The complicated symbolism should be contrasted with the much more direct and simple vision of Christ which he receives in the last Canto of the *Paradiso* (vv. 127-132): it indicates that at this stage of his spiritual life, even the Revelation of Christ comes only in dim types and shadows.

We can but guess why Dante prefers John's six wings to Ezekiel's four. If we take wings to represent flight and activity, it would indicate that in the Gospels we find a greater rapidity of movement than even that which Ezekiel attributes to the creatures of his vision. Plumptre finds in the 'threefold duality' of the three pairs of wings 'full of eyes,' a symbol of 'the vision of past, present, future—the *Respice*, *Aspice*, *Prospice* of St. Bernard.' Perhaps we may rest content with the general idea that the four Gospels being the revelation of Christ, the six wings full of Argus-eyes represent the union in Him of the active and contemplative life in their most perfect form—the complete identification of vision and obedience.[1]

The green leaves with which the living creatures are crowned refer, of course, to the third of the theological virtues, Hope. This cannot refer to Christ personally, since, according to the teaching of Aquinas, He did not need hope in this sense. As a theological virtue the object of Hope is the fruition of God, the perfect knowledge of Him. But this, Aquinas holds, Christ had from the moment of His conception; and 'what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' All He required to hope for was the beatitude of the body in immorality and glory, which is not the direct and proper object of Hope as a theological virtue.[2] The green crown of the Evan-

walls of churches, such as S. Vitale in Ravenna. His friend Giotto painted the symbolic creatures in the choir of Sant' Apollinare in that city. See Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, i. 132-143; Smith and Cheetham's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Art, 'Evangelists,' etc.

[1] Pietro di Dante sees in the six wings the six laws—natural, Mosaic, prophetic, Evangelical, Apostolic, canonical. Others find in the three pairs the spread of the Word of the Gospel in length, breadth, depth.

[2] *Summa*, iii. q. vii. a. 4.

gelists, therefore, is symbolic of the hope of the full fruition of God which their message quickens in believers. The Gospel is 'the bringing in of a better hope.' St. Paul calls Christ 'our hope,' because it is through Him the hope is fulfilled of the final vision of God.[1] Professor Earle draws attention to the way in which this symbolism of green culminates in this passage. It is 'the proper livery of the *Purgatorio*,' and here it is given the pre-eminence by its repetition: the green of the forest and the grass, the green garland of the Gospels, the lady on the right side of the Chariot who was 'as if her flesh and bone had been of emerald made'; and then all this gathered up and emphasized by the threefold repetition of the colour in the green mantle and olive wreath and emerald eyes of Beatrice.[2] Underneath it all is the feeling that even the green everlasting spring of an Earthly Paradise is powerless to satisfy the human soul: it is drawn on and up by 'the hope of glory,' the 'concreated and perpetual thirst' for the living God.

We turn now to the Chariot of the Church; and our first enquiry must be into the position it occupies in relation to the Earthly Paradise. Some virtually make the two identical: Father Bowden, for example, says: 'The Earthly Paradise symbolizes both the Church herself and man, as supernaturally restored by her.'[3] So far is this from being the case, that, as we saw, the Earthly Paradise is the state of original innocence in which the Church would have had no place apart from sin. We must never lose sight of the fact that the leading idea—the idea which embraces the entire Procession—is that of Revelation. It is therefore a larger conception than the Church. Revelation is a Divine source of knowledge, of which the Scripture writers and the Church are the channels. The Church, however, is the

[1] Heb. vii. 19; 1 Tim. i. 1. When the animals symbolic of the four Evangelists appear in pictures of Christ upon His throne, it implies that the day of hope is not yet past. In pictures of the Last Judgment they are never present: the Gospel of mercy is then closed.

[2] Introduction to Dr. Shadwell's *Purgatory*, Pt. II. pp. xl, lix.

[3] In Hettinger's *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 188 n.

central point of this Revelation—the point to which the scattered rays converge. The Old Testament writers turn to the Car 'as to their peace,' the fulfilment of their long desire; and it is in response to the prayer of the entire company that Beatrice descends and takes her station on the Chariot. She is the Spouse, the living spirit of Divine Wisdom, which makes the Chariot —that is, the Church as a visible organization—the central point of Revelation to the world. Without her, it is an organization, and nothing more. Didron in his *Christian Iconography* draws a contrast between the Procession here and the famous Triumph of Christ in the Church of Notre Dame de Brou—a contrast based on a total misconception of Dante and his meaning. He assumes two things: that the Gryphon represents the Pope, and that the Car remains for ever unoccupied. 'Dante, who was a politic poet, drew the Triumph, not of Christ, but of the Church; the Triumph of Catholicism rather than of Christianity. The Chariot by which he represents the Church is widowed of Christ, whose figure is so important on the window of Brou; the chariot is empty, and Dante neither discovered this deficiency, nor was concerned to rectify it; for he was less anxious to celebrate Christ and his doctrine, for their own sake, than as connected with the organization and administration of the Church.'[1] It would be difficult to crowd into the same space a greater number of errors. The Gryphon is Christ, not the Pope; and Christ, not in His Triumph as at Brou, but rather in His humiliation as the true *Servus servorum.* The Chariot does *not* remain empty, as Didron appears to assume; and so far is Dante from being interested only in the organization and administration of the Church, that he regards these as lifeless until Beatrice, the spirit of the Revealed Knowledge of God, descends into them.

The point of real importance is that Dante is giving us a picture in symbol of the *Ideal Church, as the perfect channel of Revelation.* The notes of this perfection are manifold. All the writers of Scripture look to the Car

[1] *Christian Iconography*, i. 317 (Bohn).

'as to their peace,' the fulfilment of their hopes. The four Gospels, the heart and kernel of Scripture, guard it at the four corners, as constituting its final law. It is drawn by Christ Himself, and it moves forward on two wheels of Love and Wisdom. The cardinal virtues and the theological dance on each side. And finally, the spirit of Revelation, personified in Beatrice, descends from God out of heaven upon it, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,' and clad in those virtues without which no man shall see God.

In this paragraph there are several points which require elucidation and proof. The first is the relation of the Ideal Church to Scripture. It is not without significance that only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are admitted to the Procession. Even the Apocryphal books are excluded. But many passages elsewhere show plainly that Dante's chief aim is to shut out the Decretals, the great body of Papal decrees which was the principal source of Canon Law. He does not, indeed, deny them all authority, for he admits Gratian of Bologna, the founder of Canon Law as a science, to the Heaven of Theologians;[1] but he refuses to place them for a moment on a level with Scripture as the foundation of the Church. Again and again he denounces the Decretalists as 'strangers and ignorant in every kind of theology and philosophy.' 'I have heard one of them declare,' he says, 'and volubly maintain that the traditions of the church are the foundations of the faith; may which impious thought be extirpated from the minds of men by those whom the world doubts not to have believed, before the traditions of the church were, in Christ the Son of God, either to come or present or having already suffered; and believing to have hoped, and hoping to have glowed with love, and so glowing to have become co-heirs with him.' In the same passage he divides 'scripture' into three classes:

(1) Antecedent to the Church. 'Before the church are the Old and New Testaments, which were "given for

[1] *Par.* x. 103-105.

eternity," as the prophet says; for this is what the church means when she says to the Bridegroom, "Draw me after thee."'[1] The Procession in the Earthly Paradise is obviously just this passage translated into symbol.

(2) Contemporaneous with the Church. In these Dante includes 'those venerable chief councils with which no believer doubts that Christ was present,' and 'the scriptures of the doctors, Augustine and others,' in which they were aided by the Holy Spirit.

(3) Posterior to the Church. 'After the church came those traditions which they call Decretals, which, indeed, though they are to be revered because of the apostolic authority, should indubitably be held inferior to the fundamental scripture, since Christ blamed the priests for the contrary.'[2] In this Dante followed Christ's example more than once. In *Paradiso*, ix. 133-138, Popes and Cardinals are denounced for deserting the fundamental Scriptures for the traditions of men for the sake of gain:

> For this the Evangel and the great Doctors
> Are derelict, and only the Decretals
> So studied that it shows upon their margins.
> On this intent are Pope and Cardinals:
> Their thoughts go not to Nazareth,
> There where Gabriel opened out his wings.

It is difficult to understand what Dante means by saying that the Decretals are '*after* the Church'—'post Ecclesiam.' At first sight it seems, as Dr. Wicksteed says, impossible to suppose the meaning to be that 'in the age of the Decretals, the church had passed away and was no longer on earth'; nevertheless the idea may really lie in that direction. The Old and New Testaments being the true foundation of the Church's authority, the making void of God's word by traditions of men might well seem to Dante's mind the beginning of that process of destruction of the Church which reached its end when Beatrice said:

[1] Song of Solomon i. 4.

[2] *De Mon.* iii. 3. Comp. *Epis.* viii. 7, where Dante rebukes the prelates of the Church for their neglect of Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, etc., for the Decretals.

'Know that the vessel which the serpent broke
Was, and is not.'[1]

This appears to be a long digression, but it is not really so. Without it we cannot understand what lies beneath Dante's exclusion from the Procession of every scripture save the Old and New Testaments. He recognized no other as of supreme authority, 'given for eternity.' After what has been said, also, it is impossible to accept the view which regards the two wheels as Scripture and Tradition: we cannot conceive of Dante, in face of these passages, accepting the Decretals as even the *left* wheel on which the Ideal Church moves down the generations. Among the numerous conjectures (for they are little more),[2] we might accept that of the Old and New Testaments, were it not that these are already represented in the allegory, and surely sufficiently represented. Perhaps this is an instance in which, as Plumptre suggests, Dante 'may be allowed to be his own interpreter,' in which case we have no alternative but to identify the two wheels with St. Francis and St. Dominic. At first statement this may sound a sad fall from the ideal heights on which the allegory has hitherto moved; but I would submit the following considerations, not perhaps as proof, but as reasons for not giving a summary dismissal to the theory.

1. If the interpretation given above to the nearly fifty steps which Dante took upstream has any truth in it, it carries us back to the very period when the two chief theologians of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders began their great careers as teachers and expositors of Holy Scripture. We know that up to this point Aquinas has been Dante's leading authority; and from this onward the mystical spirit of Bonaventura enters more and more into the poem. If, then, by the nearly fifty steps upstream he means to tell us that it was these two men who brought him into the presence of Revelation and showed him the great Procession of it in

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 34.

[2] *E.g.* The active and contemplative life, the Greek and Latin Churches, the clergy and laity, the monastic and secular Orders, etc.

Scripture and the Ideal Church, surely it would be a very natural thing to find these Masters also recognized somewhere in the allegory.

2. Now, in the *Paradiso*, Bonaventura expressly calls Francis and Dominic the two wheels of the Chariot of the Church. After praising Dominic as the founder of the other order, he goes on to speak of the founder of his own, of whom Aquinas had already pronounced the eulogy:

> 'If such the one wheel of the chariot was,
> In which the Holy Church herself defended,
> And in the field her civil struggle won,
> Truly full manifest should be to thee
> The excellence of the other, unto whom
> Thomas so courteous was before my coming.'[1]

In view of this, no option is left, so far as one can see, but to identify the two wheels with St. Francis and St. Dominic. If this seems to give these saints an undue importance, we must remember what they were in Dante's mind. One has only to read Cantos xi. and xii of the *Paradiso* to see that he regarded them as the second saviours of the Church. The Church had fallen very low:

> The soldiery of Christ, which it had cost
> So dear to arm again, behind the standard
> Moved slow, and dubious, and in number few.

In this crisis of her fortunes, the eternal 'Emperor' gave His hosts these two 'Champions,' who gathered together the scattered ranks, breathed spirit and courage into them, and marched them on to victory. It would surely be no wonder if Dante, changing the figure, regarded such Heaven-ordained men as the very wheels without which the Chariot could not move.[2]

[1] *Par.* xii. 106-111. The meaning of '*civil briga*,' 'civil struggle' in l. 108 is that the struggle against heretics corresponds in the Church to civil war in the State. It is the crushing of a revolt of traitors who have broken their vows of allegiance. Heresy, according to Aquinas, implies a profession of Christianity: a Jew or Mohammedan who never made such a profession is an infidel, not a heretic. Heresy therefore is a casting off of allegiance on the part of the citizens of the Church, and the struggle against it is civil war (*Summa*, ii-ii. q. xi.)

[2] *Par.* xii. 37-45.

3. One step remains. Francis and Dominic, passing through the same process of idealization as Virgil and Beatrice, became to the poet's spiritual imagination symbols respectively of Divine Love and Divine Knowledge. This is the meaning of the *terzina*, *Par.* xi. 37-39:

> 'The one was all seraphical in ardour,
> The other by his wisdom was on earth
> A splendour of cherubic light.'

The Seraphim were the highest order of Angels, nearest God, and burning with His love; and it is to this order Francis corresponds on earth. Even during his lifetime he was called 'the Seraphic Father' for the ardour of his love. Dominic on the other hand corresponds to the Cherubim, the second order in the Heavenly Hierarchy, that excels in knowledge. This distinction indicates a certain contrast in the types of theology characteristic of the two great religious Orders—a contrast which comes out clearly in their two leading theologians. Aquinas, the Dominican, is intellect incarnate: perfect knowledge according to his time, perfect clearness of statement, perfect calmness of argument: no mystic fervours, no seraphic ardours. His friend Bonaventura, the Franciscan, can scarcely be said to give the intellect a lower place, but he gave much freer play to the living powers of the affections, the direct intuitions of the heart. Rejecting the system of Aristotle, on which Aquinas relies, he followed the more mystical philosophy of Plato, as it filtered down to him through the writings of St. Augustine and the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.[1] If, then, we are to take the passage in the *Paradiso* as any guide, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the two wheels of the Chariot are St. Francis and St. Dominic as the earthly symbols of heavenly Love and Knowledge, without which the Church cannot move. It is corroborative of this view that the three theological virtues, of which the greatest is Charity, dance beside the right wheel of Love; while

[1] The difference is indicated by the titles which the two bear. Thomas is 'Doctor Angelicus,' Bonaventura 'Doctor Seraphicus.'

the left wheel of Knowledge is flanked by the four cardinal virtues, led by the intellectual virtue of Prudence.

It is worth while looking for a moment at the unrivalled glory of the Chariot of the Ideal Church:

> Not only Rome never with car so beautiful
> Delighted Africanus, nor even Augustus,
> But that of the Sun would be poor beside it—
> That of the Sun, which swerving was burnt up
> In answer to the prayer of the suppliant earth,
> What time was Jove mysteriously just.[1]

Professor Earle finds in this simile the idea that 'the victory celebrated by the Car is more glorious than military or cosmical glory, because it is the victory of righteousness.'[2] Doubtless, in general terms; but it is much too vague for a mind like Dante's. We get at his idea by following up his reference to the story of Phaëthon driving the chariot of the Sun so far out of its course that the earth was only saved from being set on fire by Jove striking him dead with a thunderbolt. Now, in Epistle viii, 'To the Italian Cardinals,' Dante compares these dignitaries to this incompetent driver: 'Ye in truth, who are centurions of the first rank of the church militant, in neglecting to guide the chariot of the Bride of the Crucified along the well-known course, have swerved from the way not otherwise than did Phaëthon, the unskilled charioteer; and ye whose duty it was to give light to the flock following you through the forest of this pilgrimage, have brought it with you to the brink of the precipice.' The allusion, therefore, in this Canto is surely obvious. The Chariot of the Ideal Church is more glorious than any triumphal car either of State or of that degenerate Church which has swerved so dangerously from its appointed course that the secret judgment of God will soon strike down its charioteers.[3] Doubtless this misguided car has a glory of its own, a worldly pomp and splendour, but it is not

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 115-120. The splendour of the Chariot of the Sun is described by Ovid, *Metam.* ii. 107-110. [2] *Introduction*, lii.

[3] The threat of Phaëthon's doom is hurled at them in the same Epistle: 'Inasmuch as ye turn your backs and not your faces to the car of the Bride . . . expect the scourge! Expect the fire!' etc.

for a moment to be compared with 'the beauty of holiness' of the primeval Church. This may seem far-fetched, but any one familiar with the working of the poet's mind will recognize that 'it is under such artificial colouring,' to use Professor Earle's words, 'that Dante hides deep meanings.'

We come now to the examination of the mysterious Form which is yoked to the Chariot. After describing the four living creatures, Dante proceeds:

> The space within the four of them contained
> A chariot upon two wheels, triumphal,
> Which by a Gryphon's neck came drawn along.
> Upward he stretched the one wing and the other,
> Between the middle and the three and three bands,
> So that he did hurt to none by cleaving it.
> So high they rose that they were lost to sight;
> His limbs he had of gold, so far as he was bird,
> And white the others with vermilion mingled.[1]

There is no reason whatever for rejecting the almost universal interpretation of the Gryphon as a symbol of Christ. The Gryphon is a mythical animal, half-lion and half-eagle; and, however strange it may seem to us, was a familiar symbol of Christ in the Middle Ages, the lion representing His human, and the eagle His divine nature. Ruskin has made one example well known—the Gryphon which crouches, with a dragon in its claws, at the porch of the Cathedral of Verona. A pillar rests upon its back, in sign that it is the unity of Christ's human and divine natures which bears up the Church.[2] The words of Canto xxxi. 81 are surely decisive of the reference to Christ:

> Who is one sole person in two natures.[3]

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[1] *Purg.* xxix. 106-114.

[2] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. viii. §§ 11-21. The close of the passage may be quoted: 'In its unity of lion and eagle, the workmen of the Middle Ages always meant to set forth the unity of the human and divine natures. In this unity it bears up the pillars of the Church, set for ever as the corner-stone. And the faithful and true imagination beholds it, in this unity, with everlasting vigilance and calm omnipotence, restrain the seed of the serpent crushed upon the earth; leaving the head of it free, only for a time, that it may inflict in its fury profounder destruction upon itself,—in this also full of deep meaning. The divine power does not slay the evil creature. It wounds and restrains it only. Its final and *deadly* wound is inflicted by itself.'

[3] Comp. *Par.* xiii. 26, 27.

If the reader is still in doubt, let him go carefully through Dr. Moore's convincing discussion of the problem in his valuable essay on 'The Apocalyptic Vision.' 'If the Gryphon be not Christ, is it at all conceivable,' as he says, 'that Christ should be entirely omitted and ignored in this elaborate symbolic representation of the Church which He founded, and of which He is "the chief corner-stone"?'[1]

Didron in his *Christian Iconography* has put forth the theory that the Gryphon represents the Pope as the one absolute ruler and guide of the Church: 'The Pope is also twofold in character; as priest, he is the eagle floating in the air; as king, he is a lion, walking upon the earth. . . . The Evangelists, although present at the Triumph, do not conduct it; the Pope is himself the sole guide of the Church, and permits neither the Evangelists to direct, nor ecclesiastics to assist him.'[2] There could scarcely be a greater misconception. I hope to show that the symbolism of the Gryphon is not exhausted in one interpretation. In addition to the two *natures* of Christ, there are in Him two '*governments*' (xxxi. 123, '*reggimenti*')—the imperial and the ecclesiastical. The problem of the relation of these two governments is undoubtedly one which runs through these closing Cantos; and the fundamental aim of Dante is to show that both exist in Christ as their source, and that therefore the imperial authority does not flow from the ecclesiastical, as the Papacy claimed. This derivation of both authorities direct from Christ is the thesis maintained in the *De Monarchia*, and it is simply turned into symbolic form in the twofold 'government' of the Gryphon.

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, p. 193.

[2] Vol. i. 317, 457. Didron thinks the Divine dignity of Christ is compromised by the common interpretation: 'there is a manifest impropriety in describing the car as drawn by God as by a beast of burden. It is very doubtful even whether Dante can be altogether freed from the imputation of a want of reverence in harnessing the Pope to the car of the church.' It is quite possible to be more concerned for Christ's dignity than He was Himself. Didron's whole interpretation, as Plumptre says, turns 'the Ghibelline poet, the author of the *De Monarchia*, into a thorough-paced Ultramontanist.'

Another and very peculiar meaning of the two governments is suggested by Professor Earle, which it will be best to state in his own words: 'The Griphon symbolizes the general body of the Faithful, the bulk of the Christian congregation, the simple folk, the unlettered laity, and his rigid figure is the complement to the graceful beauty of Beatrice, who represents the *élite*, the dignity, authority, wisdom, and government of the Christian Church.' When Beatrice gazes at the Gryphon, the real subject of her meditation is 'the faithful laity, the plain untutored folk who accept the Gospel from their teachers, and contribute little from their own minds beyond the instinctive recognition of spiritual truth. On these simple folk she is gazing with emerald eyes, that is to say, with eyes of Hope, and she sees the lay people, not as they appear to the casual observer, but in all the fullness of their potential and ultimate development. The mass of day labourers and mechanic artisans are yet to be, what Dante himself has been dubbed by Virgil, kings and priests.'[1] It is difficult to regard this as much more than a curiosity of interpretation. It is based on nothing beyond Virgil's words to Dante,

'Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre.'

If the laity, the common people, are thus kings and priests, holding both governments in themselves, what need is there of Beatrice, who, according to the interpretation, represents some third kind of government of the Church—the government of the *élite*?[2] And then, to make matters more complicated, this government of the *élite* has neither kingly nor priestly authority *in itself*, but is indebted to the laity, 'the plain untutored folk,' for the mere reflection of both!

[1] *Introduction*, li, xci.

[2] If it be said that the same objection applies to Dante, who also had need of Beatrice after he was made king and priest over himself, the answer is that in his case Beatrice is the spirit of Revelation of supernatural truth descending out of heaven from God,—not, as Prof. Earle makes her out to be, the *élite* of the Church as distinguished from the common people.

Nevertheless Professor Earle is not mistaken in seeing a reference to two governments in Canto xxxi. 121-123. Dr. Moore argues that *reggimenti* there means *conduct*—the actions appropriate now to the divine, now to the human nature of our Lord. There is no need to deny this, because, as Dr. Moore himself sees, it is in no real contradiction to the other interpretation. In short, the lion and the eagle carry in them a twofold symbolism. Their primary significance is undoubtedly the human and divine *natures* of Christ, referred to in xxxi. 81; and the secondary and derivative is the twofold *government*, based on the twofold nature. This, I admit, seems to complicate the symbolism unduly; the justification for it is that the problem of the two governments undoubtedly runs through the entire passage. In Canto xvi. 127-129, the Church is accused of not 'dividing the hoof,' that is, of not distinguishing the temporal and spiritual powers:

> 'Say thou henceforward that the Church of Rome,
> *Confounding in itself two governments,*
> Falls in the mire, and soils itself and burden'—[1]

the word for 'governments' being precisely that used in the present passage, *reggimenti*. Throughout the Earthly Paradise Dante is engaged in distinguishing the two governments thus disastrously confounded by 'the Church of Rome,' as he pointedly calls it; and the positions he takes up may be stated thus:

(1) The two governments exist without confusion in Christ, and He is the unity of the two, the one and only source of the authority of each.

(2) The basis of this twofold government is His twofold nature—the lion walking the earth, representing the power of rule in earthly things, and the eagle soaring into the heavens, the corresponding power in spiritual things. These governments rest on His human nature and His divine: just as the *need* for them springs from the twofold nature of man as belonging to both time and eternity.

[1] See pp. 214-218.

(3) When Dante is pure enough to look into the emerald eyes of Beatrice, symbol of Divine Revelation, as she gazes at the Gryphon, it is not the two *natures* of Christ he sees, but the *operation* of them in the two governments; and the special point of his vision is that the two are not confounded:

> As the sun in the mirror, not otherwise
> The twofold animal therewithin was beaming,
> Now with one, now with other government.
> Think, reader, if within myself I marvelled
> When I saw the thing in itself stay quiet,
> And in its image it transformed itself.[1]

So far as the mere words go, this might refer to the mystery of the Incarnation and the Person of Christ; but at the present stage of the pilgrimage this would be a theological anachronism. The mystery of the Incarnation is revealed, as far as revelation is possible, only in the Tenth Heaven, at the very end of the *Paradiso*;[2] here in Dante's imperfect moral state, all he has power to see is the operation of Christ's two natures in the two regimens which are essential to man's welfare here and hereafter,—His human nature being the foundation of the temporal power, and His divine, of the spiritual. This is the chief question of these closing Cantos, and it is peculiarly appropriate when we remember Dante's express statement that the Earthly Paradise is the figure of the happiness of this life, which it is the special function of the Emperor, the temporal authority, to secure by government according to the teaching of philosophy. This function he cannot fulfil if the spiritual power confound the two governments by claiming both; hence the separation of the two, and the defining of their spheres, Dante feels to be absolutely essential before a single step can be taken in the direction of the Celestial Paradise.

The symbolism of the colours of the Gryphon is to a large extent matter of conjecture. It is obviously suggested by the words in the Song of Solomon (v. 10, 11):

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 121-126.

[2] *Par.* xxxiii. 127-141.

'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold.' As the eagle-half represents the Divine nature of Christ, the gold of which it is composed probably stands for its pure and incorruptible holiness. The white and red of the lion-half are usually regarded as the symbolic colours of the Faith and Love of His human nature. The white, however, must here be taken for the sinless purity of His earthly life, and not for faith. It is true, as Dr. Moore says, that nothing could be more appropriate to the human nature of Christ than faith in 'its grand primitive meaning of *Trust*';[1] but almost certainly this meaning was not in Dante's mind. To Aquinas, whom he follows, faith meant a certain intellectual acceptance of Divine mysteries which lie beyond the natural reason to discover or understand, and which are presented to us in Revelation. In this sense, Aquinas expressly says that Christ neither had nor could have faith. He had no need of a revelation of Divine mysteries: from the first instant of His conception He *saw* God with full and perfect sight; and since 'faith is the evidence of things *not* seen,' obviously faith is excluded.[2] The white and red, therefore, must be taken as symbolic of purity and love—love in its supreme form of the laying down of life. We may assume, in short, that Dante has in mind St. Bernard's interpretation of the words, 'My Beloved is white and ruddy,'—though probably without the monastic tinge which he managed to impart to them: 'He is beautiful altogether, and is surrounded with the Roses of Sharon, with lilies of the valleys—that is, with the noble bands of Martyrs, and the choirs of Virgins. I who sit in the midst am akin to each, for I, too, am both Virgin and Martyr. How can I but belong to the white-robed choirs of Virgins, I who am a virgin, the Son of a Virgin, the Spouse of a virgin-bride? How, again, can I but have a place

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, p. 191.

[2] *Summa*, iii. q. vii. a. 3. We have already seen (p. 408) that Christ had no need of *Hope*, since He had the full fruition and enjoyment of God from the beginning of His conception.

among the empurpled ranks of the Martyrs, I who am the cause and the strength of martyrdom, the pattern and the reward of Martyrs?'[1]

Still more difficult is it to understand the symbolism of the eagle's wings. Dante sees the Gryphon stretch them upward until they pass through the rainbow-coloured streamers and are lost to sight. Two things he notes specially: the point at which they pass through the bands—'between the middle and the three and three,'—and the fact that not one of these is injured by the cleavage. It is easier to see that we have here a very definite piece of symbolism than to feel sure of its interpretation. Perhaps the general idea is, in Plumptre's words, that 'the wings of the eagle, *i.e.* the working of the Divine nature of the risen Lord, co-operated harmoniously with the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit in ways beyond human ken, as the wings themselves stretched beyond the seer's gaze.' This, however, is too general. Butler, by an ingenious combination of passages in the Psalms, identifies the two wings as mercy and justice or truth, the two Divine attributes from which the Incarnation sprang. If we accept this view (and there is much to support it),[2] the meaning is that the mercy and justice of God first

[1] *Cantica Canticorum*, Sermon xxviii. (translated by Rev. S. J. Eales).

[2] It may be well to quote Butler's words: 'Looking to Psalms xxxvi. and lvii., and comparing verses 5 and 7 of the former with 1 and 11 of the latter, it seems that we must understand them as denoting—the one mercy, the other truth or justice. Then their position with regard to the bands will be made intelligible by a reference to Ps. xxxvi. 10, which in the Vulgate (where it is xxxv. 11) reads as follows: "Prætende misericordiam tuam scientibus te, et justitiam tuam his qui recto sunt corde"; "O stretch forth Thy mercy over those that know thee (*scientia*), and thy justice over them that are of a right heart (*consilium*)"'—*scientia*, knowledge, and *consilium*, counsel, being the gifts of the Spirit next the wings, one on each side (Appendix B, p. 428). St. Bernard in his *Cantica Canticorum* (Serm. vi.) uses another figure: mercy and judgment are the two feet of God—by the foot of *mercy* He assumed the flesh, by the foot of *judgment*, he gave authority to execute judgment to Christ, 'because he is the Son of Man' (John v. 27). St. Bonaventura begins his *Life of Jesus Christ* by quoting the dramatic contest before the throne of God which issued in the Incarnation: Mercy urging pity on the lost race, Justice demanding punishment. The two are reconciled by God Himself undertaking 'to do satisfaction' for man. 'Thus then was at length fulfilled that prophecy of the Psalmist, "Mercy and Truth met together, Justice and Peace kissed each other," Psalm lxxxiv.'

descended to the earth in the Incarnation and then ascended to heaven, in perfect harmony with the seven gifts of the Spirit. The exact point of the passage of the wings is significant. They cleave the streamers one on each side of the central gift, which, in the Vulgate of Isaiah xi. 2, 3, is *Fortitudo*. In other words, the justice and mercy of God in the Incarnation enfold the gift of Fortitude. Now Fortitude, according to Aquinas, is 'endurance, or the remaining steady and unflinching in dangers.' Its highest form is martyrdom, and the supreme example is the death of Christ.[1] The justice and mercy of God, having thus exercised perfectly this central gift of Fortitude, find themselves in harmony with the remaining gifts: Wisdom, Intellect, Counsel, on the one side, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord, on the other: not one is injured, all co-operate harmoniously with that central endurance of the Cross. Some such interpretation seems preferable to that of Scartazzini which makes it symbolic of the union of Divinity and Humanity: the three bands on each side standing for the Trinity, and the central one added to either three producing the number four which represents Humanity. This is a symbolism of mere number, and takes no account of the things numbered: it gives no special meaning, for example, to the fact that the central band is *Fortitude*, which Dante evidently wishes to connect in some way with the Incarnation.[2]

[1] *Summa*, ii-ii. q. cxxiii. a. 6; cxxiv. a. 3.

[2] Landino works out a complicated scheme of correspondence between wings and bands: 'The wings of the Gryphon are two, the right represents the Divine justice, and the left the mercy, which while He was on earth He always stretched to heaven, and united with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit. These are stretched between the seven bands, which are the seven sacraments, signs of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, in such fashion that they set between them the middle one, which is the Eucharist, that is, the most Holy Body of Christ, which verily is in the middle between justice and mercy, inasmuch as Christ instituted this sacrament in sign of justice, with which we may render to God such sacrifice as we are bound to render, because no other was fitting to the Divine excellence. He instituted it again in sign of mercy, because with it we seek the mercy of God, by which and not by anything due, eternal life is given to us.' In further working out the correspondence, Landino makes the Eucharist stand as sign of Knowledge, whereas it obviously corresponds to Fortitude as above.

We come now to the three Ladies dancing and singing at the right wheel of the Chariot, and are glad to find something of which there is no dispute. They are the three theological virtues, in their ideal purity, as their symbolic colours show: Love so red that in the fire she had been invisible; Hope, so green that her very flesh and bones seemed emerald; and Faith, white as the snow new-fallen. Sometimes Faith led the dance, and sometimes Love: Faith, because to love God and hope in Him we must believe that He is; and Love, because nothing quickens Faith and Hope like Charity. Hope never leads, because it is dependent for its very existence on its sister-virtues. And finally, it is the song of Love which determines the movements of the dance, swift or slow, Love being 'the royal law,' the great commanding virtue, which gives the right order and measure to man's life. Even sin, as Virgil explained on the Fourth Terrace, is simply Love in various forms of disorder and disproportion.[1]

Beside the left wheel in the form of nymphs dance the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude. These are the virtues on which the natural life hinges, just as the theological virtues are essential for the life above nature. Justice gives every man his due; Temperance restrains the desires for pleasure within right bounds; Fortitude controls the fear of suffering; but it is Prudence which decides in all these cases what are the proper modes and boundaries of action. For Prudence is an intellectual virtue whose function is to apply the restraints of reason to every aspect of the natural life. Hence she leads the dance with her three eyes: for perfect prudence means 'a good memory of things formerly seen, and good knowledge of things present, and good foresight of things to come.'[2]

[1] For the relations in which the theological virtues stand to each other, see Aquinas, *Summa*, i-ii. q. lxv. a. 4, 5; ii-ii. q. xvii. a. 7, 8.

[2] *Conv.* iv. 17, 27; *Summa*, i-ii. q. lxi.; ii-ii. q. xlvii.; q. xlix. 'If a man love righteousness, her (Wisdom's) labours are virtues: for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude: which are such things, as men can have nothing more profitable in their life'

These four virtues are clad in purple, and there is some dispute as to the exact shade and meaning of this colour. Dr. Moore rejects somewhat contemptuously the common explanation 'that purple is the regal or imperial colour which is assigned to the Cardinal Virtues, because they govern and regulate human conduct'; and he enters into a long argument to prove that 'the foundation and chief ingredient' of purple is red, the symbolic colour of Love.[1] I cannot regard the two views as being so exclusive of each other as he evidently thinks, especially if we connect the purple not with the government of human conduct in some vague general sense, but with its government under an Emperor. We have seen more than once that Dante regards the Earthly Paradise as the figure of 'the blessedness of this life,' which it is the duty of the Emperor to secure. But the blessedness of this life is secured only through the virtues on which it depends. For my own part, therefore, I have no doubt that Dante clothed these four nymphs in the imperial purple because they represent the four natural virtues on which the imperial authority rests, and without which no Earthly Paradise of Empire can exist. This, however, is no denial of Dr. Moore's view. The truth is, it is just here that the somewhat artificial distinction between theological and moral virtues which runs

(Wisdom of Solomon, viii. 7). For the three eyes of Prudence, compare Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, v. 744-749:

> 'Prudence, allas! oon of thine ẏen (eyen, eyes) three
> Me lakked alwey or-that I com here!
> On time passed wel remembred me,
> And present time ek coude ich wel y-see,
> But futur time, or I was in the snare,
> Coude I not see: that causeth now my care!'

[1] *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, pp. 184-186. Scartazzini takes the same view, and Landino states it as a matter of course: 'He presents these arrayed in purple, to denote charity and the fervour of love, without which no one can have these virtues.' Aquinas discusses the two questions—whether there can be moral virtues without charity, and whether there can be charity without the moral virtues. His answer is that all the moral virtues are infused simultaneously with charity, which is their 'principle'; and that moral virtues cannot exist without charity, except in so far as they seek an end which does not exceed the *natural* faculty of man: when 'a *supernatural* last end' is sought, charity is essential (*Summa*, i-ii. q. lxv. a. 2, 3; ii-ii. q. xxiii. a. 7).

through mediæval theology, breaks down. Dante knew perfectly well, as Aquinas also knew, that in the highest sense there is, and there can be, no virtue without love, either in the individual or the state. This is expressed symbolically in the Third Heaven of the *Paradiso*. It is Venus the Heaven of Lovers, and therefore Love is its great theme. Its angelic rulers are the Principalities or Princes. 'According to Dionysius, they represent the principality of God and draw earthly princes to imitate this by ruling with love, "in order that whatever is in the chief place may exercise lordship with all love and may join love with lordship."' And then, in illustration of this, Charles Martel shows Dante how in the Sicilian Vespers the lack of love in the princes of his own house of Anjou wrought its ruin and the disruption of its kingdom.[1] We cannot be wrong therefore in uniting the two views above referred to: the four cardinal virtues are clad in the imperial purple because they are regarded as the foundation of imperial law and government; but the ground colour of purple is red, the colour of 'the royal law' of love.

The interpretation of the rearguard of the Procession is comparatively simple. It represents the remaining books of the New Testament under the forms of their writers.[2] Immediately behind the Chariot came two grave and venerable old men, similar in bearing, but unlike in their raiment. The first is St. Luke, 'the beloved physician,' whose garb shows that he belongs to 'the family of the highest Hippocrates.' He is here as the author of the Acts of the Apostles; and his Gospel, as we saw, is one of the four living creatures at the corners of the Car. By his side walks his friend and companion, St. Paul, who represents his various Epistles. He showed 'the contrary cure' from St. Luke, whose function was the cure of the body. St. Paul's is the cure of the soul, and it is a cure accomplished only by wounding. He carries in his hand 'a sword shining

[1] *Par.* viii. See *Dante's Ten Heavens* by E. G. Gardner, p. 21.

[2] The colour of their robes and garlands has been already discussed, pp. 404-406.

and sharp,'—not here the emblem of his martyrdom, but 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' the keen word of his Epistles, 'piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.' It is plain that Dante had felt its piercing power: even on the far side of the river it made him afraid, remembering probably the sharpness of its edge as it cut the seven wounds of sin upon his brow.

Behind these, two and two abreast, walk 'four of humble aspect.' It breaks the unity of Scripture to see in these the four great Latin Doctors of the Church, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory, or four of the early Popes.[1] It is obvious that Dante intends them for the writers of the Catholic Epistles, James, Peter, John and Jude. Their 'humble aspect' probably represents the comparatively lowly place occupied by their short letters in the great Procession of Revelation.

Then comes the last figure:

> Behind them all an aged man alone
> Coming in sleep, with countenance acute.[2]

It is manifestly St. John, as the author of the Apocalypse, the last book of Scripture. He is 'alone,' partly as the last survivor of the Apostolic band, partly as an exile in the isle Patmos, and partly perhaps in allusion to the legend that he is tarrying in some long trance till the return of his Master.[3] The 'coming in sleep with countenance acute' refers, of course, to the visions in the Spirit recorded in the Apocalypse, and the keen insight into the future of the Church. The visions which Dante is himself soon to see may be regarded as in some sort a continuation of the apocalyptic scenes of this last book of Scripture.

When the Chariot came directly opposite Dante a thunderclap caused the whole Procession to halt, and this has more significance than is generally supposed.

[1] Sixtus, Pius, Calixtus, Urban—named as martyrs in *Par.* xxvii. 43, 44. In Botticelli's drawings illustrating *Purg.* xxx. and xxxi. the figures are obviously the four Latin Doctors. Gregory grasping the keys wears the tiara, Jerome his cardinal's hat, and Ambrose and Augustine the bishop's mitre.

[2] *Purg.* xxix. 143, 144.

[3] The legend sprang from John xxi. 21, 22.

Plainly it is a supernatural signal, a direct voice of God, since at this height there are none of the lower variations of weather to cause it. It is, in the first place, a signal that the movement away from the sacred East is arrested: shortly after this the whole Procession wheels back to the Tree in the midst of the Garden, which represents the Empire. The thunder, therefore, indicates a great critical turning-point in the relations between Empire and Church. To Dante personally it signifies two things—judgment and illumination. Thunder is a familiar symbol of judgment in Scripture. Dante is now face to face with the whole range of revealed truth. The spirit of Revelation in the person of Beatrice arraigns him at her bar, and drives home on his conscience the full enormity of his unfaithfulness to her. It is not until he is purified by confession and the waters of Lethe, that he is able to understand this Revelation even on its earthward side—the relations between Church and Empire: for that is undoubtedly the chief lesson taught him in the closing Cantos. Now, in his *Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas regards *thunder* as symbolic of the drawing aside of the veils which hide any truth of Revelation, that man may see it as it is in itself. The idea occurs in a mystical exposition of the Vulgate of Job xxvi. 14: 'Lo, these things that have been said are but a part of his ways; and whereas we have heard scarce one little drop of his speech, *who shall be able to look upon the thunder of his greatness?*' The words italicized are taken as indicating the third and highest knowledge of which man is capable. The two lower, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, are Reason climbing its dim way 'through creatures' to the Creator; and Faith accepting by the hearing of the ear truths supernaturally revealed under a veil of types and shadows. But 'the third knowledge' is Sight —the removal of every veil and the direct, immediate vision of these supernatural truths in their essence; and the word *thunder* in the verse quoted indicates, according to Aquinas, the perfect plainness with which this final knowledge reverberates through the soul. It

is difficult to think that this passage was not in Dante's mind. It fits in exactly with the point of moral and religious experience he has now reached. Reason has guided him back to the natural virtues; Faith has set before him a great revelation of supernatural truths, which he can but dimly discern under veil after veil of type and shadow, symbol and allegory. There remains, therefore, the last stage, the removal of these veils; and the peal of thunder is the Divine signal that the great process of making all things plain is about to begin. From this point to the end of the *Paradiso*, it is one long uncovering of the mysteries of Revelation, one veil after another falling away, until at last the soul stands face to face with God, and sees Him as He is.

CHAPTER XXVI

Beatrice and the Judgment of Dante

1. *The Edge of the Sword*

When the seven golden candlesticks—'the Septentrion of the First Heaven'[1]—stood still, the four-and-twenty elders turned towards the Car 'as to their peace': in other words, they see in the Church the fulfilment of all their prophetic longings. But the Chariot is empty, a mere external organization, without the living spirit of Revelation. The elder who represents the writings of Solomon thereupon cried three times '*Veni, sponsa, de Libano*,' 'Come, O Bride, from Lebanon,'[2] all the others repeating it after him. At the cry, a hundred 'ministers and messengers of life eternal' rose upon the Chariot, like the blessed from their graves at the last trump. They are the Angel-guardians of the Church, and in the present connection are probably regarded as the medium of Divine Revelation. The law of Moses was 'ordained through angels.'[3] The life of Christ in the flesh was compassed with angelic presences—the annunciation of His coming, His birth in Bethlehem, His temptation in the wilderness, His passion in the garden, His rising from the dead. The exact number, one hundred,—the perfect number multi-

[1] The seven candlesticks are compared to the seven stars of the 'Wain' or 'Great Bear,' which guide the sailor. The celestial Septentrion is clouded by nothing save man's sin.

[2] Song of Solomon iv. 8.

[3] Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2. 'We may without rashness believe that part of the ordinary ministry of the Angels is to have care of families, congregations, and the like, and especially that St. Michael is the Guardian of the Catholic Church, as he was of old of the Synagogue' (*Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, by Sylvester J. Hunter, S.J., ii. 301).

plied by itself,—may symbolize the completeness of their work for man's salvation. They appear to have risen from within the Car itself, as if to show us the heavenly powers and presences with which the Church was filled in its pure primeval days, in contrast to the foul forms of evil which Dante is soon to see take possession of it. There seems to have been another strand of mystical suggestion in the poet's mind. In the *Vita Nuova* (xxiii.) he narrates a dream of the death of Beatrice. 'And I seemed to look towards Heaven, and to behold a multitude of angels who were returning upwards, having before them an exceedingly white cloud: and these angels were singing together gloriously, and the words of their song were these: "*Osanna in Excelsis*"; and there was no more that I heard. . . . And so strong was this idle imagining, that it made me to behold my lady in death; whose head certain ladies seemed to be covering with a white veil.' That dream of death is here changed into a vision of eternal life. Beatrice is about to return, transfigured and glorified. The white veil is still upon her head, but it is now a bridal veil, and circled round with green olive leaves of the hope and peace and wisdom of eternity. She 'descends out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'; and the Angels that once carried her white soul up with Osannas, now scatter clouds of flowers to welcome her return. It is by such mysterious correspondences that Dante fulfils his vow to write of her what had not before been written of any woman.

The multitude of the heavenly host, carrying out the figure of a marriage festivity, scatter flowers above and around, and welcome the Bride with words drawn from Scripture and Virgil, Revelation and the natural Reason: '*Benedictus qui venis*,' 'Blessed art thou who comest,' and '*Manibus O date lilia plenis*,' 'O give lilies with full hands.' There are few things in the whole range of the poem that touch the imagination more subtly with the sense of a haunting impalpable loveliness, than the union of these two passages. Both refer

to Beatrice. The gender of 'Benedictus' is, of course, a difficulty; but it would have sounded unnatural to change words so familiar. On the other hand, it is scarcely conceivable that Dante, as some think, would be guilty of the irreverence of applying them to himself;[1] while their application to the Gryphon is excluded by the fact that he is already here, whereas the obvious attitude of the Angels is expectation of one who is about to come in response to the invitation of the elders. The mere letter of the passage does not help us much: the only thing that really helps is to remember what it all meant for Dante. The underlying thought, or rather emotion, is the great mystery of death in which his spirit had dwelt ever since, nearly ten years before, 'the very gentle Beatrice' had passed away, and left the city solitary. What, for instance, had the mere natural Reason to say of this untimely withering of pure and lovely human life? He cannot discuss the question in cold dialectics, it is too full of his long sorrow for that. But the one line from Virgil tells all that mere natural Reason can say or do in face of the last parting: '*Manibus O date lilia plenis.*' It can strew flowers on the lifeless form as an 'unavailing due,' to use Virgil's own hopeless words, but that is all.[2] The line is part of the famous elegy on the young Marcellus in the Sixth of the *Æneid*. Marcellus, son of Octavia the sister of Augustus, and the Emperor's heir, died at the untimely age of twenty. He was a youth of great promise, the centre of great hopes; and when Virgil read the passage aloud before the Emperor, the mother of Marcellus swooned, and Augustus himself could not restrain his tears. Virgil,

[1] Professor Earle thinks it is addressed not only to Dante, but to Dante as the Bridegroom! The unspeakable irreverence of thus coolly appropriating a title universally applied to Christ makes this interpretation absolutely impossible; not to speak of the Bride receiving the Bridegroom as a judge receives a culprit at the bar.

[2] *Æn.* vi. 883-886:

'Manibus date lilia plenis:
Purpureos spargam flores, animamque nepotis
His saltem accumulem donis, et *fungar inani*
Munere.'

indeed, has some dim thought of a return of the dead. The Cumæan Sibyl leads Æneas to the Elysian Fields, where his father Anchises points out to him the spirits of his own posterity, the princes and heroes of the Trojan race who were to create the Roman Empire, Marcellus among the rest. They have all lived before, are purifying their souls for a thousand years in Hades, and when the time of their next incarnation arrives, they will drink the river of Lethe, forget their past, and be born into their new earthly forms.[1] But Virgil knows that these are uncertain visions: Anchises dismisses his son by 'the ivory gate,' through which 'the Shades send false dreams to the upper air.'[2] That is all the natural Reason can say as it stands face to face with death: when it has dreamed its dreams and soothed its heart with the vain gift of lilies to the dead, there still remains the old Virgilian 'wellspring of sadness,' 'the sense of tears in mortal things.'[3]

There is surely something very tender and beautiful in the way in which, by the mere quotation of this line, Dante thus at once associates the heathen dream of immortality with the Christian faith, and suggests how far it falls short of it. It was not all a dream: this return of Beatrice is the reality of which it was the myth and shadow. If, as Plumptre says, Dante saw 'lilies scattered on the grave of Beatrice,' the line must then have sprung instinctively into his mind, and probably with all the Virgilian melancholy in which it was written. The melancholy is now past. The great Christian doctrine of immortality is revealed. The lilies are scattered 'with full hands,' not now for the death of Beatrice, but for her life, transfigured and glorified. Everything speaks of life: the flowers, the 'ministers and messengers of life eternal,' the comparison of them to the saints rising from their tombs singing *Alleluia*. The '*Benedictus qui venis*' has also taken a higher range of meaning. Originally, 'Blessed is he that

[1] Compare the story of Er the Pamphylian at the close of Plato's *Republic*.
[2] *Æn.* vi. 893-898.
[3] *Æn.* i. 462: 'Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.'

cometh' was chanted by disciples who knew not that their Master was going to His death. And now that His death is past, the words refer to His return in the power of His resurrection-life, in the Spirit of Revelation, of which Beatrice is the symbol.[1]

We come now to the descent of Beatrice upon the Car; and, since the interpretation of what we may call the impeachment of Dante hangs on the view we take of her, it becomes necessary at this point to form some general conception of what she stands for, not merely in the *Commedia*, but in the poet's life. It is impossible to enter into the almost interminable controversy which has gathered round her, and fortunately it is not necessary for our purpose. Those who wish to get an idea of it will find the whole subject carefully discussed by Dr. Moore in his article on 'Beatrice' in his Second Series of *Studies in Dante.* The various theories are grouped in three classes: Symbolist, Idealist, Realist. There can be little doubt that he is right in his combination of the three. There was, to begin with, an actual historical Beatrice. Whether she was Beatrice Portinari, as Boccaccio positively declares, or some other, matters comparatively little. It may even be left undecided whether the name Beatrice is not chosen for allegorical reasons. But, as Dr. Moore shows, allegory without a basis of fact would have been an anachronism in the thirteenth century. It was certainly not the nature of Dante's mind to allegorize in the air,—indeed, he expressly says it is neither possible nor rational to do so: 'Always the literal ought to go first, as that in the meaning of which the others are included, and without which it would be impossible and

[1] Vernon connects the line from the *Æneid* with the passing of Virgil rather than the return of Beatrice: 'I venture to offer the opinion that this is the moment when Virgil vanishes, just when Beatrice is about to come into view, and that, as he himself wrote of scattering lilies over the glorious tomb of the young Marcellus, so Dante quotes the choicest line in the choicest passage of Virgil's great work, by way of figuratively throwing flowers in sorrow and regret over the grave that is to separate them for ever.' This is beautifully put, and was doubtless an element in Dante's emotion; but the view given above seems to me to contain the larger truth which he is striving to shadow forth.

irrational to understand the others, and especially the allegorical.'[1] We need have no hesitation, therefore, in regarding Beatrice as a woman of flesh and blood. The *Vita Nuova* tells the familiar story of his meeting her in his ninth year, and the marvellous idealization of her which ensued. If we identify her with Beatrice Portinari, it would fit in exactly with the date of her death as given in this Canto—'on the threshold of her second age,' that is in her twenty-fourth year.[2] Her rising 'from flesh to spirit' doubtless completed her apotheosis: she became his ideal of Womanhood. But beyond this, she was glorified in his religious imagination into a symbol of Heavenly Wisdom in its manifold senses and revelations. For, as Dr. Moore says, 'the symbolism of Beatrice both here and elsewhere . . . is complex, and can scarcely be given in a single word, since different aspects of such symbols come into prominence at different times. Thus Beatrice often symbolizes Theology, not as a scientific system, but rather in its aspect of Revelation, or Revealed Truth. Further, as the Church is the 'keeper and witness' of Revelation which is guarded and dispensed by Ecclesiastical Authority, that embodiment of Authority is sometimes represented by Beatrice. Following on from this to a still more definite and concrete symbol, she sometimes stands, as in some parts of the Vision now under consideration, as the representative of the ideal Papacy, which guides and governs humanity on its spiritual side as the Empire does on its temporal side, according to the theory expounded and defended by Dante in the *De Monarchia*.'[3] But there can be little doubt that the leading idea is Revelation—an idea larger than either Scripture or the Church. Beatrice is, in short, *the Spirit of Revelation* descending out of

[1] *Conv.* ii. 1.

[2] Human life (*Conv.* iv, 23, 24) being caused by heaven, is like the arch of heaven. It is divided into four ages: (1) *Adolescence*, up to the twenty-fifth year; (2) *Youth*, from twenty-five to forty-five, the thirty-fifth year being the centre of the arch; (3) *Old Age*, from forty-five to seventy; (4) *Senility*, about ten years longer. Beatrice died June 8, 1290, at the age of twenty-four, and therefore 'on the threshold of her second age.'

[3] *Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series, p. 188.

heaven from God, gathering together all Scripture into the unity of her personality, and using the Church as the organ of her power.[1] Probably what suggested this special symbolism was the fact that even in boyhood Beatrice had been to Dante's imagination the revelation of something high and holy and heavenly; and years simply defined this vague emotion until she became identified with the Revelation of Divine Truth which uses Church and Scripture as its channels and instruments. It was this which swept over him as a vast and overwhelming sorrow and remorse: she had been to him from the first moment 'a thing ensky'd and sainted,' a pure vision of Divine truth, one in spirit with the Revelation of God in Christ, in Holy Scripture, in the Ideal Church; and to all that knowledge of things Divine, he had proved false and faithless.

From this point on to the end of the *Paradiso*, one thought binds together the various parts of the poem: the slow and gradual recovery of the vision of all that Beatrice stands for, the removal of veil after veil with which his unfaithfulness had hidden her, and the constantly growing beauty of her eyes and smile: in plain words, and laying aside the allegory, the transformation of Faith to Sight, the gradual penetration through all the similitudes and symbols in which Revelation at first conceals itself, to the direct vision of the things themselves, the Divine realities of which they are the shadows. And, inasmuch as Revelation knows 'no other cloud than the veil of sin,' Dante is conscious that until this cloud is dissipated, he has no power to look on Beatrice face to face. Hence the stern impeachment of him on which we now enter, her merciless exposure of his unfaithfulness, and her determination to make him realize the full enormity of it, before she will unveil to him her first and second beauty.

Unless we bear all this in mind, it will be difficult to understand the meaning of the outermost veil, the

[1] That Beatrice as the Spirit of Revelation is regarded by Dante as greater than the Church and Scripture seems clearly implied in *Purg.* xxxii. 13-18.

shower of flowers scattered by the Angels. Dante compares it to the tempering of morning mists which makes it possible for the eye to bear the glow of the rising sun.[1] The flowers obviously represent the joy of the heavenly world at the descent of Beatrice, the welcoming of the Bride; and the point of the passage is just that it is a joy in which Dante has no right yet to share, and therefore it becomes an obscuring medium. We shall never understand these closing Cantos until we give due weight to the contrast between the eager joy with which Dante climbed the Mountain in his longing to see Beatrice,[2] and the entirely unexpected sternness with which she turns upon him and dashes the long-anticipated joy to the ground. 'Nowhere,' says Dean Church, 'has the rapture of long-waited for joy been told in such swift and piercing accents, as in the story of the moment in which Beatrice reveals her presence—"*Guardami ben—ben son, ben son Beatrice*"': 'Look at me well—I, even I am Beatrice.'[3] This is an entire misunderstanding. The 'long-waited for joy' is sternly dashed from his lips. There must be no drinking of that cup until he has settled with her for the long unfaithfulness of a life-time. All this comes on Dante with a shock of terrible surprise. Quite obviously he thought that all he had to do was to present himself before her 'with exceeding joy,' but he is quickly undeceived. It is a perfectly natural experience: the moment he sees her, the lost ideal of his youth breaks over him in a sudden wave of anguish. This is why the shower of wedding flowers is but an additional veil to hide her: it represents a heavenly joy to which he has yet no right, and which he cannot have until he has settled his account with what he might have been.

The symbolic colours which we have seen scattered singly in various parts of the Procession are now gathered together and concentred on Beatrice as the living Spirit of the whole:

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 22-33. [2] See *Purg.* vi. 43-57; xxvii. 34-45.
[3] Vernon's *Readings in the Purgatorio*, Introduction, xv.

Crowned with olive over a white veil,
A lady appeared to me, under a green mantle,
Vested in colour of the living flame.[1]

It is interesting to compare the Beatrice here with that of the *Vita Nuova*. Two of the symbolic colours appear in the earlier work. The first time Dante saw her at the age of nine, she was clad in the hue of Love: 'a subdued and goodly crimson,' obviously less bright than the glow of 'living flame' in which she is now arrayed. Years after, in a dream of her death, he saw certain ladies covering her head with a white veil; and, as already pointed out, this white veil of death is now changed into the bridal veil of one returning in 'the power of an endless life.'[2] But the great change is in relation to the third of the colours. Green is conspicuously absent from the *Vita Nuova*; no gleam of Hope lights up its atmosphere of death and sorrow. But in the Beatrice of the Earthly Paradise, it is this very colour which is made conspicuous, as if to emphasize Hope as her peculiar function here. 'The colour of broadest area is Green,' as Professor Earle says, 'for it is through the instrumentality of Beatrice that Hope is kept alive in the pilgrim through the darkest passages, and that it increases to the end . . . The peculiar appropriateness of Hope to her present office is signalized by a threefold repetition. She has a green mantle, a wreath of olive over her veil, and eyes of emerald. In accordance with this, she represents from end to end the principle of Hope. It is by her action that the pilgrim is rescued from despair and encouraged through a fearful journey; by her that in the Earthly Paradise his aspirations are exalted; and to her as the sustainer of his Hope he addresses his parting words of gratitude:—

O Donna, in cui la mia speranza vige.'[3]

The connection of the olive crown with the white veil is not a mere accident. We must never forget what

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 31-33.
[2] *Vita Nuova*, ii, xxiii.
[3] *Par.* xxxi. 79: 'O Lady, in whom my hope hath vigour.' Professor Earle's Introduction, lix, lx.

has been so often pointed out, that in scholastic theology Faith is regarded as a Revelation given under a veil of types and shadows and similitudes. It is expressly distinguished from Sight, the direct vision of the Divine realities. But Sight is the object of the theological virtue of Hope. It is not Hope in some vague general sense; it is specifically the Hope that Faith will change to Sight. Hence the significance of crowning the veil of Faith with the green of Hope: Hope that the veil itself will be taken away and the final Beatific Vision given, in which the pure soul sees all things directly and immediately in God. Such a Hope is the very crown of Faith. The olive is sometimes taken as symbolic rather of *peace*, or of *wisdom*, 'the foliage of Minerva' (l. 68); but in reality the three meanings blend into one another. When Hope fulfils itself in Sight, it sees the Eternal Wisdom of which Minerva's was but the dream, and in that vision finds its peace, the end and satisfaction of its long quest.

The first effect of the appearance of Beatrice is the departure of Virgil: the natural Reason has fulfilled its task when it has led the soul into the presence of the Diviner Wisdom of Revelation. Even through the double veil of flowers and Faith, 'the mighty power of ancient love' smote Dante as in the days of his boyhood, sending a sudden shock through his very blood. In his agitation he turned to Virgil, as a child in distress runs to his mother, exclaiming:

> 'Less than a drachm
> Of blood remains in me, that trembleth not;
> I know the traces of the ancient flame.'[1]

The trembling of the blood is an allusion to the same strange agitation the first time he saw Beatrice as a child: 'At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens*

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 46-48.

dominabitur mihi.'[1] He recognized in it 'the traces of the ancient flame,' thus using one of Virgil's own lines in acknowledgment that he had led him back to the ideal of his earliest days.[2] It is no uncommon experience: Dante is neither the first nor the last who has discovered that the chief service of Reason is to bring us back to the simple faith and love of childhood, and make us feel that these are a truer revelation of Divine things than all the speculations of our maturer years.

None the less, it came on Dante with a peculiar shock of pain that Virgil was gone, never to return: even Paradise Regained could not keep back his tears:

> But Virgilius had left us of himself
> Bereft, Virgilius best beloved of fathers,
> Virgilius, to whom for my salvation I did give me;
> Nor did whate'er the ancient mother lost
> Avail my cheeks now purified with dew,
> That weeping they should not again turn dark.[3]

What exactly is the meaning of this grief? It represents partly Dante's sorrow for Virgil's doom as a man, swept back by a mysterious judgment from the very threshold of Paradise to his hopeless Limbo of unsatisfied desire. Professor Earle, indeed, enters into a long and ingenious argument to prove that he went straight to the Celestial Paradise; but it is an argument which involves the denial of the plain meaning of many passages.[4] It is inconceivable that Dante would have wept

[1] *Vita Nuova*, ii. 'Behold a god stronger than I, who coming shall rule over me.'

[2] *Æn.* iv. 23: 'Agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ.'

[3] *Purg.* xxx. 49-54.

[4] *E.g.* The inscription over the Gate of the Inferno is only a specious lie: its 'only credential is that the mouth of Hell hath spoken it' (p. xliii). Virgil's own statements about his hopeless doom (*Inf.* iv. 42, *Purg.* xxi. 10-18, etc.) are explained away by attributing them to absolute ignorance of his future fate (pp. lxiii, lxiv). Professor Earle bases his argument finally and uncompromisingly on the *green* enamel of the meadow in Limbo as an emblem of Hope, and finds a hint of the ultimate salvation of Brunetto Latini in the comparison of him to a runner for the Green Mantle at Verona (*Inf.* xv. 121-123). If the symbolism of colour is to be thus rigidly tied to one meaning, without regard to context, then the creatures with the greatest hope of salvation are the three Furies at the Gate of Dis, for they are 'begirt with *greenest* hydras,' 'con idre *verdissime*' (*Inf.* ix. 40); and Lucifer himself stands a good chance, his central face being 'vermilion,' the very colour of Love with which the New Testament writers in the Procession of Revelation are crowned (*Inf.* xxxiv. 39; *Purg.* xxix. 148).

because he was saved; and it is equally inconceivable that he would have passed through the Ten Heavens without some indication of his place in them, if he really believed Virgil to be there.

There is, however, another reason for Dante's sorrow —the feeling, namely, that in the presence of the higher revelation of Scripture, Virgil could never be the same to him again, that he could never turn to him for guidance as of old. We are reminded of the painful struggle of St. Jerome to conquer his love of the heathen classics, which held him back from the sacred writers.[1] Dante seems to have had the same struggle. His admiration of Virgil is visible in every page of the poem up to this point: the *Æneid* was almost his Bible. There is, indeed, much in Virgil that must have appealed powerfully to 'the natural man' in Dante. 'The note of his supremacy among all the poetic artists of his country,' writes Professor Sellar, 'is that subtle fusion of the music and the meaning of language which touches the deepest and most secret springs of emotion. He touches especially the emotions of reverence and of a yearning for a higher spiritual life, and the sense of nobleness in human affairs, in great institutions, and great natures; the sense of the sanctity of human affections, of the imaginative spell exercised by the past, of the mystery of the unseen world. This is the secret of the power which his words have had over some of the deepest and greatest natures both in the ages of faith and in more positive times. No words more subtly and truly express the magic of his style than those in which Dr. Newman characterizes "his single words and phrases, his pathetic half-lines, giving utterance as the voice of nature herself to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the experience of her children in every age."'[2] All this Dante must have felt with a peculiar intensity. From henceforth he must live as if he felt it not. The higher Revelation claims him and demands the renunciation

[1] Compare the way in which Augustine at first turned from the Scriptures as far inferior to Tully (*Confessions*, iii. 5).

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Art. 'Virgil.'

of the lower. The renunciation is made, Reason gives way to Faith; but not Paradise itself can keep back the sudden rush of tears. It is the sacrifice of the natural intellect, part of the price he has to pay for Heaven.

We come now to what I have called the impeachment of Dante, round which a vast amount of controversy has raged. The general meaning I believe to be quite simple. Dante is not being charged with any new sin, nor is he receiving any new forgiveness. He has purified his soul of the Seven Deadly Sins, but the *memory* of them remains and suddenly turns into the sharpest anguish. If it be asked why he did not feel it earlier, the answer is that the soul is not capable of feeling it until it has attained a certain height of purity. It would have been a moral impossibility at the foot of the Mountain. It is only when a man has risen above his sins that he is pure enough to see how far he has fallen. The ideal of his youth turns fiercely upon him with bitter reproaches: the lost faith of childhood, gifts of Heaven despised, great opportunities squandered, impulses of good quenched—all rise before his memory in accusation and upbraiding. Beatrice is the natural mouthpiece of Dante's own accusing memory, for it was in her that the ideal life, the 'vita nuova,' first dawned upon his young imagination.

She begins by rebuking his grief for the loss of Virgil: there is a greater loss for which he must yet shed tears:

> 'Dante, because Virgilius goes his way
> Weep not yet, weep not yet awhile,
> For thou need'st must weep for other sword.'

This is the one place in the poem where Dante's own name occurs.[1] In the *Convito* (i. 2) he says 'the rhetoricians will not allow any one to speak of himself without necessary cause'; and one of the necessary causes he specifies is that which moved St. Augustine to write his *Confessions*, namely, to do 'the greatest service to others by way of teaching.' This is perhaps the 'necessity' for

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 55-57. The only other possible case is *Par.* xxvi. 104, where many MSS. read *Dante* for *Da te.* There is little doubt, however, that the latter is the true reading.

the mention of his name here, to which he refers in line 63. But is it not probable that Beatrice uses it with a touch of sarcasm at its meaning? 'Dante' is a contraction of 'Durante'—'Enduring,' and that may be the very edge of the reproach: 'How hast thou belied the promise of thy name, Enduring One! How short a space thy love for me endured! How soon it veered to others! Weep not for Virgil: weep rather for thine own inconstant soul.'

Turning at the sound of his own name, he saw even through the shower of lilies and the white veil 'crowned with Minerva's leaves,' that the Lady on the Car was directing her eyes straight to him. Standing upon the left side of it, like an admiral upon his ship, with the imperious gesture of a queen she continued as one who keeps the hottest words to the last:

> 'Look at me well: I, even I, am Beatrice!
> How didst thou deign to come unto the mountain?
> Didst thou not know that *here* man is happy?'[1]

This is a passage of great difficulty. What mountain does Beatrice mean? It is commonly assumed that it is that of Purgatory on which they are standing. If so, the question is ironical, and the irony, as Butler says, is dropped in the next line. This is not a very satisfactory interpretation, and one is inclined to think there is something in Professor Earle's view, that Beatrice is really drawing a contrast between two mountains—that of Purgatory and the 'Mount Delectable,' '*il dilettoso monte*,' which Dante attempted to climb in order to escape from the dark and savage wood at the beginning of the *Inferno* (i. 13-18, 77-78). The latter has never been very satisfactorily explained. Professor Earle thinks it is the hill of Philosophy and Science as distinguished from Faith. Even so, it cannot be regarded as positively evil, for its shoulders were illumined by the sun, 'the planet which leads men straight through every road,' and Virgil rebukes Dante for not climbing it. Perhaps its defect was its comparative lowness: it may represent

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 73-75.

some low ideal of the better life, which even Virgil, the natural Reason, thought the crowning height of virtue and wisdom. The questions of Beatrice would then mean: 'Why didst thou deign to approach that low ideal of life? Didst thou not know that *here*, not there, man is happy?' One wonders whether the mountain in the beginning of the *Inferno* is not Parnassus. Nothing would then be more natural than for a poet like Virgil to describe it as

> 'the mount delectable
> Which the beginning is and cause of every joy.'

In other words, Dante may have thought at one time to find an escape in poetry from the dark and tangled forest of the world, but learned that mere Art is no protection from the wild beasts of evil passion.

Under this rebuke, so different from the anticipated joy, Dante hung his head like a chidden child; but catching sight of himself in 'the clear fount' of Lethe, he turned his eyes in shame to the grass. Then suddenly the Angels, pitying his confusion, sang '*In te, Domine, speravi*': 'In thee, O Lord, have I put my hope' —the first eight verses of Psalm xxxi., not passing beyond '*pedes meos*': 'Thou hast set my feet in a large place,' because the tone changes at that point.[1] The reproach of Beatrice left Dante like the frozen snow among the pine forests of the Apennines, 'the spine of Italy,' when it begins to melt and trickle down within itself under the breath of the South wind; but the compassion of the Angels completely broke him down, the ice which had closed in around his heart suddenly changed to 'breath and water,' sighs and tears, which in his anguish burst forth through mouth and eyes. Beatrice, however, remains absolutely unmoved. Turning to the Angels, she firmly sets aside their interference:

> 'Ye keep your watch in the eternal day,
> So that night nor sleep from you doth steal

[1] The words are echoed in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars: *Sperent in te*, 'Let them hope in thee' (*Par.* xxv. 98). A comparison with ll. 73, 74 will show that only those who know God's name have the right to hope; and at this point, evidently, Dante had not the right.

> One step the ages make upon their ways;
> Wherefore my answer is with greater care
> That he may hear me who on yon side weeps,
> So that fault and sorrow may of one measure be.'[1]

This is not, as it sounds, a broad hint to the Angels to mind their own concerns. It is really a rebuke of what seems to have been one of Dante's chief infirmities, a tendency to self-pity. It was precisely this which first drew him into unfaithfulness to Beatrice. On the very first anniversary of her death, while he was weeping for her, he lifted up his eyes and saw 'a young and very beautiful lady, who was gazing upon him from a window with a gaze full of pity, so that the sum of pity appeared gathered together in her.' This 'donna pietosa' fostered his self-pity[2] until he was in danger of entire forgetfulness of Beatrice, and he was compelled to wrench himself away from her. It is this same weakness which attacks him here from another side. This pity of the Angels represents the pity of God, for their song follows 'the music of the eternal spheres' (ll. 92, 93). If, then, God and the holy Angels who know the whole range of his sin pity him, Dante feels that he may well pity himself. But Beatrice knew that self-pity is ruinous to the soul; it seeks the blessedness of the man 'whose sin is covered,' but seeks it in a false way, a way which can never really cover it, never blot it out of the memory. As already said, the only way to cover it is *not* to cover it, to face it openly, sternly to refuse to pity ourselves, and to seek only that our sorrow be 'of one measure' with our fault. The very perfection of the knowledge of the Angels is the reason why Beatrice is careful to set Dante's sin clearly before him: he must see it as plainly as they see it, that his sorrow may be in harmony with the truth and fact of things, as they are known from the standpoint of heaven and eternity.

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 103-108.

[2] Dante expressly states that self-pity was his danger at this time: 'Wherefore, since the miserable, when they see the compassion of others for them, are the sooner moved to tears, *as if having pity upon themselves*, I then felt my eyes begin to wish to weep' (*Vita Nuova*, xxxvi.).

The impeachment falls into two parts: one addressed to the Angels, in which Dante feels the 'edge' of the sword, the other with the 'point' turned directly on himself. They represent the terrible power of memory to set our secret sins in the light of God's countenance, and the recoil of memory upon the guilty conscience. The entire incident is obviously imitated from the reproaches with which Philosophy, in the form of a majestic woman, assailed Boethius.[1] The accusation addressed to the Angels is long, but it is necessary to have it before us before proceeding to the exposition:

'Not only by operation of the great wheels
Which direct every seed to some end,
According as the stars are its companions,
But by the largess of Divine graces,
Which have such lofty vapours for their rain
That our sight comes not near to them,
This man was such in his new life
Potentially, that every righteous habit
Would have made in him a marvellous proof;
But so much the more malign and the more wild
Becomes the soil with bad seed and untilled,
The more it hath of good terrestrial vigour.
Some time I sustained him with my countenance;
Showing unto him my youthful eyes,
I led him with me turned in the right way.
So soon as I was upon the threshold
Of my second age, and changed life,
This man took him from me, and gave himself to others.
When from flesh to spirit I was risen,
And beauty and virtue were increased in me,
I was to him less dear and less delightful;[2]

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[1] *Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. I.

[2] Landino's interpretation is that there are two theological ages—boyhood and manhood. The former is Beatrice in the flesh, *i.e.* in the active life, which governs the things of the flesh; 'the second age,' the virile, is when Beatrice rises 'from flesh to spirit,' from the active life to the contemplative, to the vision of things incorporeal and eternal. The accusation then is that Dante, finding this higher life of contemplation too hard, sank down to worldly philosophy. Miss Hillard takes substantially the same view in the Introduction to her translation of the *Convito*. Professor Earle's interpretation is at least picturesque: 'The death of Beatrice is the expiration of juvenile theology, with its types and figures and shadows, and the romantic charm of old Hebrew stories, and marvellous legends of saints, and many a medieval miracle with a beautiful moral, of piety aptly rewarded and wrongdoing compensated with poetical justice; a childish paradise where everything is right, and

And he did turn his steps through a way not true,
Following after false images of good,
That never any promise pay back whole.
Nor prayer for inspirations me availed
By means of which in dream and otherwise
I called him back, so little recked he of them.
So low he fell, that all appliances
For his salvation were already short,
Save showing him the people of perdition.
For this I visited the gateway of the dead,
And unto him, who so far up hath led him,
My intercessions were with weeping borne.
The high decree of God would broken be,
If Lethe should be passed, and such viands
Should be tasted, without any scot
Of penitence, which overflows in tears.'[1]

Dante does not hesitate to say that his fall was an instance of the principle, *Corruptió optimi pessima*: the richer the soil, the ranker the weeds. The soil of his soul had been rich indeed: 'the good stars met in his horoscope,' 'the great wheels' of Nature had dowered him with marvellous gifts. On this rich and fertile soil God had showered down His graces from the high vapours of His Spirit, which float mysteriously above man's life. Now at last he sees how rich in all the possibilities of good had been his 'vita nuova,' how wonderful a harvest of right habit it might have borne. He wasted the golden hour, abandoned Beatrice, the young ideal of his life, and did this at the very moment when she rose from flesh to spirit, becoming more beautiful and worthy to be loved. All her efforts to recall him were in vain; her voice, penetrating to his very dreams, was powerless to win him from 'the false images of good.' Nothing was left at last but, for very love, to plunge him into Hell, to show him 'the lost people.' All this long career of unfaithfulness he now saw clearly, even as it was seen by the great Intelligences from whose eyes not one step of Time is

heaven is just above the tops of the elm-trees.' When this juvenile theology died, Dante slipped into Philosophy almost unconsciously, and was not aware for a time that he had practically dropped *all* theology (*Introduction* to Shadwell's Translation of the Purgatorio, Part II. lxxvi-lxxxiv).

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 109-145.

hidden; and two things stood forth burningly against the dark retrospect: first, that it was simple justice to refuse him one drop of Lethe until he had drunk the bitter cup of memory to the lees; and next, that without those waters of Forgetfulness there was, and there could be, no Paradise for him.[1]

[1] I have not stayed to disentangle the historical in this passage from what Dante calls the 'allegorical and true' (*Conv.* ii. 13), partly because I do not think they were clearly distinguished in the poet's own consciousness. The white heat of his emotion fused them into one. The words 'vita nuova' in line 115 are frequently taken as meaning simply Dante's youth; but it is inconceivable that he could put such words into the lips of Beatrice without allusion of any kind to the *Vita Nuova*. In point of fact, we may be certain, Dante was never able to separate in thought his youth and the New Life into which his great love for Beatrice ushered him. It is impossible to discuss the question of his unfaithfulness until we have before us his own confession in the next Canto.

CHAPTER XXVII

Beatrice and the Judgment of Dante

2. *The Point of the Sword*

We come now to the second part of the impeachment, in which the point of the sword is turned straight on Dante himself. Addressing him as one still on the far side of 'the sacred river,' and therefore with full memory of his sins, Beatrice peremptorily demands his confession: let him say at once if the charge is true. In his confusion Dante cannot find his voice; and a second time comes the demand, with the reminder that 'the sad memories' have not yet been effaced by the water of Lethe. This time he manages to falter forth a 'Yes' so feebly that the sight was necessary to catch it; and, as a bow breaks when overdrawn, he burst into a torrent of tears and sighs, and his voice failed in its passage. His grief does not seem to soften Beatrice. She demands the cause of his unfaithfulness: was it something within the very desire of her, some trench in the way, or some entangling chain, which made him lose hope of ever reaching the Highest Good to which she was leading him? And as to the others for whom he abandoned her, what pleasures or profits did they carry on the brow, that he had to 'promenade' before them?[1] Then at last with bitter sobs and tears he falters forth his confession:

[1] As Butler says, no satisfactory explanation has been given of the words 'lor passegiare anzi' (xxxi. 30). Various translations are suggested: 'to walk toward them'; 'to walk in front of them,' as a servant before his master; 'to woo them'; 'to pay court to them,' etc.

'The present things
With their false pleasure turned away my steps,
Soon as your countenance concealed itself.'[1]

Now, for the first time, Beatrice softens. Silence or denial would not have made his sin less, she says, but confession turns the wheel back against the edge of the sword, in the court of Heaven. Yet in order to deepen his shame, and thus strengthen him against the Sirens another time, she proceeds to show how her death, the concealing of her face which turned him to sin, was the very thing which should have saved him from it; or, to use her own words,

'how to the contrary part
My buried flesh ought to have moved thee.'

The argument is that when he saw how she, the fairest thing on earth, died and left the soul deceived, he should have risen at once above all things mortal to that eternal and true life into which she had entered:

'Never did nature or art present to thee
Pleasure so great as the fair members within which
I was enclosed, and which in earth are scattered.
And if the highest pleasure thus did fail thee
By reason of my death, what mortal thing
Should then have drawn thee into its desire?
Surely thou oughtest, at the first arrow
Of things deceitful, to have risen up
Behind me, who was no longer such.
Thou shouldst not have weighed down thy wings
To await more strokes, either young girl,
Or other vanity of such brief use.
The callow birdlet waits for two or three,
But before the eyes of those full-fledged,
A net is spread in vain or arrow shot.'[2]

As he stands with downcast face, ashamed and penitent by mere hearing, Beatrice commands him to lift up his beard, that sight may increase his grief. What he sees when he, as it were, 'uprooted' his chin, must wait until we have discussed the meaning of this severe and searching impeachment. The word 'beard' revealed to Dante 'the venom of the argument'—it is that 'most

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 1-36. [2] *Purg.* xxxi. 49-63.

burning word' which Beatrice was keeping for the last. The meaning which lies upon the surface is that his sin had no excuse of inexperienced youth: it was committed in the full maturity of bearded manhood. He was five-and-twenty when she died, and his unfaithfulness had lasted during the ten intervening years, so that he was no mere 'callow birdlet.' But it is difficult to believe that this, bad as it is, is all Dante means by the strong phrase, 'the venom of the argument.' It is almost impossible for us to think of Dante with a beard at all. None of his portraits gives one. Yet that he wore a beard in the year 1300 is certain from this passage. When did he begin to wear it? If Boccaccio is to be believed, immediately after the death of Beatrice, and in consequence of it: 'Now, by reason of his weeping, and by reason of the affliction of his heart within him, and by reason of his taking no heed to himself, he had become in outward guise almost a savage thing to look upon; gaunt and unshaven, and almost utterly transformed from that which afore he was wont to be; in so much that his aspect must of force move compassion not only in his friends, but in every other who beheld it.'[1] This is the true 'venom of the argument': his overwhelming grief for Beatrice which had once made him 'gaunt and unshaven,' had been powerless to keep him true to her. He dried his tears, and trimmed his beard, and gave himself to others. Beatrice, who had known only the smooth young face of his 'first age' which we still see on the walls of the Bargello, notes the change in his appearance, and by a single word touches him to the quick by reminding him that he still bore the tokens of an ancient grief which had soon forgotten her, and made unworthy terms with the world.

We come now to one of the most hotly disputed questions in the *Commedia*, the exact nature of Dante's unfaithfulness. Setting aside minor variations, the theories virtually reduce themselves to two—devotion to Philosophy to the neglect of Theology, and a fall into

[1] See Wicksteed's *Early Lives of Dante*, p. 20.

an immoral course of life. There is really no reason why these should be pitted against each other as if they were mutually exclusive. It seems to me quite certain that Dante meant to confess both, when he speaks of 'the present things,' and 'false pleasure,' and 'things deceptive.' Take first his devotion to Philosophy. After the death of Beatrice, he relates in the *Vita Nuova* a temptation to forget her which assailed him in the person of the *donna pietosa*, the Lady of Pity referred to in last chapter. Her very resemblance to Beatrice helped to draw him into unfaithfulness, for she was 'of a like paleness.' The temptation was finally broken by 'a strong visible phantasy' of Beatrice clad in the 'subdued and goodly crimson' in which he had first seen her. 'And then, this evil desire being quite gone from me, all my thoughts turned again unto their most excellent Beatrice. And I say most truly that from that hour I thought constantly of her with the whole humbled and ashamed heart.'[1]

Now, this temptation is the starting-point of the *Convito*. The passage in the *Vita Nuova* concerning this Lady of Pity had been so grossly misunderstood that many had misfamed him of vice; and in order to protect his good name he declares that she was the symbol of Philosophy, into the study of which he threw himself ardently after the death of Beatrice.[2] Some regard this as an ingenious veil of allegory which he draws across a moral lapse; but, after all, it is scarcely fair to make Dante thus add hypocrisy to vice. That there was an actual lady, and that he idealized her into Philosophy, I have no doubt; but there is not the slightest reason to suppose that his love for her was anything else than Platonic. The extravagant terms in which he speaks of Philosophy as 'the spouse, sister, and daughter of the Emperor of Heaven,' are just the proof of how entirely it had taken the place of Theology in his mind. This, then, is one element in the sin here confessed. It is not that Philosophy in itself is evil; the evil comes in when it forgets its place as

[1] *Vita Nuova*, xl. [2] *Conv.* i. 2; ii. 2, 16; iii. 1, etc.

handmaid to Theology, and becomes a substitute for it.[1]

The advocates of the philosophical theory are usually indignant with those who see in this passage the confession of a moral lapse. The reason is that far too much emphasis is laid by both sides on the 'pargoletta,' 'the little girl,' of line 59. All sorts of identifications have gathered round her: Beatrice herself, Gemma Donati, the poet's wife, the Gentucca of Canto xxiv., the Donna Pietosa of the *Vita Nuova*, the Pietra of the Canzoni commonly known by that name. All this scandal is indignantly repelled by the advocates of the philosophical theory as pure calumny. Both are right, and both are wrong. The 'pargoletta' means something, but it is certainly a mistake to regard it as the very head and front of Dante's offending. It is part, but only part, of a general moral declension from his early ideal of life. It is quite useless to deny this in face of the confession of sin which Dante has been making all up the Mountain. It is true, of course, that he represents mankind; none the less does he weave his own personal sins into the common penitence. On almost every Terrace there is some acknowledgment of participation in the sin there purified. Three in particular stand out conspicuous: Pride, Sloth, and Sensuality. Dante bends in sympathy with the Proud, and says that already their punishment weighs him down. The moment he steps on to the Terrace of Sloth, the vice of the place seizes him and 'puts his legs in truce.' And it is quite impossible to read the story of his shrinking from the flames which burn away the vice of Sensuality, without feeling that we have here the record of a personal experience. I have omitted Dante's words to Forese Donati on the Terrace of Gluttony:

> 'If thou bring back to mind
> What thou with me hast been and I with thee,
> The present memory will be grievous still,'

[1] The adherents of the philosophical view lay great stress on the words of Beatrice about the '*scuola*' which Dante had followed (*Purg.* xxxiii. 85-90), and its inferiority to herself; but, if the interpretation given below is correct, it is really a school of Theology—that of Aquinas—which claimed both temporal and spiritual power for the Papacy. See p. 493.

because it is by no means certain that they refer to Gluttony. But they are a plain confession of some course of evil life, in which they had been companions.[1]

The conclusion, then, to which his own statements lead us, is that his unfaithfulness to Beatrice was twofold —intellectual and moral. On the intellectual side, it meant the substitution for a time of Philosophy for Theology, of human Reason for a Divine Revelation. On the moral, it meant the yielding to the 'false pleasure' of 'the present things,' despairing of the fair impossible ideal revealed in Beatrice, and letting himself float with the current of worldly morality of his day and generation. His confession here on the Mountain-top is not a new one, distinct and separate from that of the various Terraces; it is simply the clear recognition of his memory, as it reviews the course of his life, that the fountain-head of all his errors, intellectual and moral alike, had been unfaithfulness to Beatrice and to the ideal of which she was the Divine Revelation.[2]

Having now, therefore, traced his sins to their source, and drunk the bitter cup of memory to the dregs, and by this final confession set himself in an attitude of perfect openness toward God, Dante finds a new power of vision granted to him, which grows steadily to the end of the poem. The first veil to be taken away is that of the flowers: when Dante with a great struggle lifts his face at the command of Beatrice, he sees that 'those primal creatures,' the Angels, are resting from their strewing. If the interpretation already given is correct, the idea is that Dante's sorrow has purged his eyes. Coming as he did with eager anticipations of the delight of meeting Beatrice, he finds that he is not worthy to enter into the joy with which the Angels welcome her. It hangs between him and her like a concealing veil, and he begins to see her more clearly when the long-looked-for joy is turned to sorrow. The

[1] *Purg.* xi. 73; xiii. 133-138 (Pride); xvii. 73-75 (Sloth); xxvii. 49-51 (Sensuality); xxiii. 115-117 (Forese Donati).

[2] Dr. Moore's Essay 'The Reproaches of Beatrice' (*Studies in Dante*, 3rd Series) is a careful and moderate discussion of this most difficult question.

first glance strikes him senseless to the ground. She is turned toward the Gryphon, the animal

Which is one sole person in two natures.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the reference is to the union of the human and Divine natures in Christ.[1] It must not be supposed that Dante saw this union now: it forms the final revelation of the *Paradiso*. It is Beatrice who sees it, and the vision renders her so beautiful that, even under her veil and on the far side of the river, she now surpassed her ancient self as much as on earth she had surpassed others. A passion of remorse seized him. All things else that he had loved most became most hateful to him, and he fell to the earth vanquished,

and what I then became
She knoweth who had given me the cause.[2]

On recovering from the swoon into which his grief had thrown him, he found himself plunged in Lethe up to the throat. Matelda was bending above him, saying 'Hold me, hold me!' Passing light as a shuttle over the water, she drew him on behind her; and when he neared 'the blessed shore,' he heard '*Asperges me*' so sweetly sung that memory failed to retain it. 'The beautiful lady' opening her arms embraced his head, and so plunged him down that he was forced to swallow of the water. Finally, having drawn him out, she led him thus bathed to 'the dance of the four beautiful ones,' the four Cardinal Virtues, each of whom covered him with her arm.[3]

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 81. The words are theologically very exact, so as to exclude in particular the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches. Nestorius sacrificed the unity of the person, dividing Christ into two, as Aquinas says, 'the Man, who is the Son of God by adoption, and the Son of God by nature, who is the Word of God.' To save the unity of person, Eutyches denied the distinction of natures. To quote Aquinas again, he held that 'before the union there were two distinct natures, one divine and one human; but in the union they both met so as to form one. He said then that the person of Christ was *of* two natures, but did not subsist *in* two natures.' This shows the significance of the preposition '*in*' in the above line, and the exactness of Dante's theological knowledge. For the discussion of the various theories of the Incarnation, see Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, Bk. iv. 27-49.

[2] *Purg.* xxxi. 89, 90.

[3] *Purg.* xxxi. 91-105.

This is an allegory of the process by which the soul attains forgetfulness of its sins. Lethe is no mere magic draught, as it is in heathen myth. After the stern way in which Beatrice held the bitter cup of evil memory to his lips till he had drained it to the dregs, Dante knew that he could never forget his sins save by a great moral process which created a better and purer memory. The active life of good deeds rouses him out of the swoon of grief into which the memory of his sin had thrown him. Matelda, the symbol of that life, cries 'Hold me, hold me!' because only by continuance in well-doing was there any hope of reaching the far shore of forgetfulness. She plunges him up to the very throat in the water, because all the faculties of the flesh having sinned, must now be immersed in good deeds. She draws him through the water lightly like a shuttle, to indicate, apparently, the ease he attained in the doing of right. After persevering in this life a certain length of time, he drew near to 'the blessed shore,' and heard '*Asperges me*,' the sweet music of pure and happy memory.[1] Then comes the last stage. The bodily faculties have been immersed, but the head has remained uncleansed, the lusts of the mind. Matelda, therefore, embraces the head with her arms, engages all the mental faculties in the active life of good works, and plunges them also underneath the surface. This completes the process of oblivion, and Dante rising as if 'born of water and of the Spirit,' enters into the joy of a life of purer, happier memories. Matelda leads him, with the waters of this second baptism still upon him, to the four Cardinal Virtues at the left wheel of the Car. We must not imagine, of course, that he was able to live the active life of good works through which he had just passed, without the virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude. But even Dante cannot make allegory bend to every fold and turn of life and circumstance; and what he evidently means is

[1] The words '*Asperges me*' (Ps. li. 7) are used when the priest sprinkles holy water on the altar, clergy, and people before High Mass. Here the idea is that it is the holy water of the good works of the Active Life (Matelda) which washes away the memory of past sins.

that only at this point did he enter into perfect fellowship with these virtues—the fellowship of their joy and protection from sin, for they received him into their dance and covered him with their arms. In short, it indicates the time when the virtues of the active life became perfectly easy to him; and the implication is that not till then is the evil memory entirely blotted out. We have already discussed the probable meaning of this forgetting. According to St. Augustine's distinction, the memory of sin as an experience passes away, but remains as matter of the intellect, else praise for salvation were impossible. However Dante may have explained it psychologically, the point of importance is that he conceived it ethically, as the natural result of the active life of good deeds.

The four Cardinal Virtues Dante had seen at the foot of the Mount in the form of stars,[1] for like the stars they are the rulers of man's life; but their greater nearness on the top indicates in part the change that has passed over them under the Christian Revelation. On the face of a heathen man like Cato they shone as stars from the distant heavens; but to the Christian soul they descend as nymphs and cover it with their arms. But whatever their form, their function is to lead men to the eyes of Beatrice, that is, the demonstrations of Christian Theology or Revelation. Before the descent of Beatrice, before the Christian Revelation was given, they were ordained to be her handmaids. In other words, these virtues of the natural life are the appointed guides to the demonstrations of revealed and supernatural truth. But only to the demonstrations, not the persuasions, which are the inner light of the eyes of Beatrice, the eyes lit up with the gladness of her smile. This limitation is laid down by Aquinas, who argues that the final happiness of man 'does not consist in the knowledge of God which is to be had by demonstration.' Demonstration gives a knowledge of

[1] Compare St. Bernard (*Cantica Canticorum*, Serm. xxvii.): 'A holy soul, then, is a heaven, having understanding for a *sun*, faith for a *moon*, and for *stars* countless virtues.'

God by negations: it shows, not what God *is*, but what He is *not*. It removes certain attributes which are inconsistent with the conception of God, and thus sets Him apart from other beings; but this mere negative distinction of Deity is far removed from that final and positive knowledge of His very essence which constitutes the Beatific Vision. This Vision comes only by contemplation; and the organs of contemplation are Faith, Hope, Love, the Theological Virtues on the other side of the Car, 'whose gaze is more profound,' and to whom 'the four beautiful ones' pass on the soul. In short, the function of the natural virtues is to create that harmony and peace within the soul, without which contemplation is morally impossible. For, as Aquinas says, 'to the perfection of contemplation there is requisite . . . rest from the disturbing forces of passion: that is attained by means of the moral virtues and prudence.'[1] *Intellectually*, then, these four virtues can only set the soul in front of the eyes of Beatrice, the demonstrations which give a mere negative knowledge of God; but *morally*, by stilling the war of human passions, they create that state of inward peace in which, and in which alone, the higher virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love can give the contemplation of God which is the final happiness of man. The point at which Dante has arrived is the transition from the *eyes* of Beatrice to her *smile*—from demonstration to the joyous rapture of contemplation.

Singing, then, with the gladness of a soul whose sins are forgiven and forgotten, and all its passions laid to rest, the four Nymphs lead Dante to the Gryphon's breast and bid him gaze at Beatrice:

> 'See that thou spare not thine eyes;
> We have set thee before the emeralds,
> Whence Love once drew his weapons for thee.'[2]

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, i. 14; iii. 37, 39.

[2] *Purg.* xxxi. 115-117. Contrast this injunction of the cardinal virtues not to spare his eyes gazing at Beatrice, with the rebuke of the theological virtues, 'Too fixed!' (Canto xxxii. 9). The idea seems to be that at Dante's present stage his knowledge of Revelation (Beatrice) must come by the good works of the natural virtues; the rapt contemplation of the supernatural virtues is dangerous and may blind him.

It is difficult not to see in this a hint of the colour of the eyes of Beatrice the woman, though none is mentioned in the *Vita Nuova*—that peculiar grey-green of the sea, perhaps, which we sometimes meet, and which lightens and darkens like a falling wave. For Dante's allegorical purpose here, it deepens to the hue of emerald, the symbolic colour of the very flesh and bones of Hope. For Hope as the theological virtue is the firm expectation that Faith will change to Sight, that the dim types and shadows under which Revelation descends into this world will pass away for ever in that world beyond all shadows, where we know as we are known. The idea, therefore, is that even the lower demonstration of the natural virtues is full of Hope; imperfect as it is, it feels that it carries within itself the promise and potency of the final knowledge of Divine things.[1]

It is a sign of the comparatively low power of vision Dante has yet reached that he is unable to gaze directly at the Gryphon himself. The mystery of the Incarnation, even though it is, so to speak, broken up for him into animal forms, is yet beyond the power of his spiritual sight: he can see only the reflection of it in the emerald eyes:

> As in the glass the sun, not otherwise
> The twofold animal was beaming therewithin,
> Now with one, now with other government.
> Think, reader, if I within me marvelled
> When I saw the thing in itself stay quiet,
> And in its image it transformed itself.[2]

The meaning of this has been already discussed. Dante is not yet able to gaze directly at the two natures (*due nature*) of Christ; what he can see is the two governments (*reggimenti*), of which the two natures are the foundation. If it be felt that this is a great fall from the ideal heights of contemplation to which we expected to be caught up, I can only say that we must

[1] Green was also associated with contemplation and with the Trinity. In the Feast of the Trinity, officiating priests sometimes wore green vestments (Hulme's *Symbolism of Christian Art*, p. 25). White is now used.

[2] *Purg.* xxxi. 121-126. See pp. 417-421.

take Dante as we find him, and allow him to be his own interpreter. It is just those ideal heights of contemplation which made it necessary, in his mind, to settle this problem of the two governments—the relation of the temporal and spiritual powers as revealed in Christ. Contemplation is possible, says Aquinas, only under certain conditions. One is, as we saw a little ago, 'rest from the disturbing forces of passion' in the individual; but another is a corresponding peace in the community, 'rest from exterior troubles, which is the whole aim of civil life and government.' 'Thus,' he adds, 'if we look at things rightly, we may see that all human occupations seem to be ministerial to the service of the contemplators of truth.'[1] This seems to be exactly Dante's contention in the remaining Cantos. They are occupied almost exclusively with this question of the two governments, or, to state it in terms of his symbolism, the relations of the Chariot and the Tree. So long as they fought and claimed each other's jurisdiction, they destroyed that condition of 'rest from exterior troubles,' without which there could be no contemplation of Divine things for the mass of men. So far, therefore, from being a fall from ideal heights, the right settlement of the relation of Church and State is the necessary preliminary to the reaching of such heights at all. There is no Earthly Paradise, no world of quiet in which the contemplative life is possible, until the two governments reach the ideal which Dante saw in the mirror of the emerald eyes: each fulfilling its function of reflecting the light of the Incarnation within the perfect and unbroken peace of Christ.

This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the next stage in Dante's vision of Beatrice. The three Theological Virtues now advance, 'dancing to their angelic roundelay':

> 'Turn, Beatrice, turn thy holy eyes,'
> Such was their song, 'unto thy faithful one,
> Who has to see thee moved so many steps.

[1] *Contra Gentiles*, iii. 37.

In grace do us the grace that thou unveil
To him thy mouth, so that he may discern
The second beauty which thou dost conceal.'[1]

The first beauty is that of her eyes which we have just examined—the beauty of the active life under the two governments of Church and Empire in their true ideal relations, as revealed by the four natural virtues. The second beauty is that of her mouth, the 'holy smile' (xxxii. 5) of her 'persuasions,' the inner light of wisdom by which she is able to 'imparadise the mind':[2] in other words, the contemplative life into which the soul cannot enter without the aid of the three supernatural virtues. We are surprised at first to hear them call Dante 'thy faithful one'; but it helps us to understand what he meant by forgetting his sins. It is not that they are absolutely blotted out of his mind, but rather that they are now transfigured by the grace of God. In the light of where he now stands he sees that underneath all his wanderings there was a soul of goodness in his evil, an unconscious faithfulness which guided his many steps back to the contemplation of her face. And then she unveils, and all poetic speech is powerless to tell her second beauty:

O splendour of living Light Eternal!
Who underneath the shadow of Parnassus
Hath grown so pale, or drunk so at its cistern,
He would not seem to have his mind encumbered
Trying to render thee as thou appearedst,
There where, harmonizing, the heaven o'ershadowed thee,
When in the open air thyself thou didst disclose?[3]

A great deal of unnecessary conjecture has gathered round these lines. There is no need to drag in, as so many do, the music of the spheres, the harmony of

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 133-138.

[2] *Par.* xxviii. 3.

[3] *Purg.* xxxi. 139-145. Dante uses the word 'splendour' always in one definite sense, as explained in *Conv.* iii. 14: 'The custom of the philosophers is to call Heaven *light* (*lume*), in so far as it exists in its primal fountain; to call it a *ray* (*raggio*), in so far as it exists in the medium between its source and the first body by which it is arrested; to call it a *splendour* (*splendore*), in so far as it is thrown back on some other part which it illuminates.' The constant and essential idea of *splendour*, therefore, is that of light received from God and *reflected* to another—not direct vision of Himself. See *Par.* xi. 39; xxix. 13-18; xxx. 97, etc.

which is a symbol or shadow of the unveiled beauty of Beatrice. Nor is it the idea that Heaven in some general sense, 'harmonizing with the land of Innocence, with difficulty shadows forth the emblem of the Divine Beauty.' The meaning is quite plain. The heaven of which Dante is thinking is obviously that of the seven streamers of light from the seven golden candlesticks, which overshadowed the whole Procession.[1] The light was broken up into the colours of the rainbow representing the seven gifts of the Spirit of God. Up to this time Dante had evidently not felt their unity, but regarded each as isolated from its companions. Now that Beatrice unveils her 'holy smile' the *harmony* of all spiritual gifts with one another, and with the entire Revelation for which she stands, enraptures him beyond all words. She is the 'splendour of the living Light Eternal,' the unity of 'the many-coloured wisdom of God' in the heaven that streams above her head. 'Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things. I loved her and sought her from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty.' 'She passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it.'[2]

[1] *Purg.* xxix. 82: 'Beneath so fair a heaven.'
[2] Wisdom of Solomon viii. 1, 2; vii. 24-29.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Chariot of the Church and the Tree of Empire

The second beauty of Beatrice, the 'holy smile' of contemplation, so fixed Dante's eyes upon her with longing 'to satisfy their ten years' thirst,' that all else was forgotten in her. 'Walls of indifference' enclosed him on this side and on that, the moral significance being that he passed into a state of intense contemplation of Divine Wisdom which made him utterly oblivious to the virtues on his right hand and his left, theological and cardinal alike. The mere fact that he *could* forget them is proof that he is not yet fit for the life of contemplation, and the 'goddesses' upon his left, the Theological Virtues, turned his eyes in their direction by exclaiming 'Too fixed!' The obvious meaning is that Dante's eyes are not yet strong enough to gaze at the unveiled mysteries of Revelation. When, in the preceding Canto, the four nymphs set him before the eyes of Beatrice, her first beauty of the active life, they enjoined him not to spare his eyes, plainly because they were equal to that lower vision; but the second beauty blinds him like one whose eyes are 'just newsmitten by the sun.' 'Let the soul,' says St. Bernard, 'desist henceforth, so long as she is on the earth, from searching out with too eager a curiosity the things which are in heaven, lest in seeking to view too nearly the majesty [of God], she should be overwhelmed by His glory'; and he warns his brethren that the contemplative life is less necessary than the active: 'The breasts from which you nourish the children you bring forth are better—that is, more necessary, than the wine of contemplation. The one is that which maketh glad

the heart of one man alone; but the other that which edifies many. For, although Rachel be the fairer, Leah is the more fruitful. Do not, therefore, linger too much over the sweetness of contemplation, for the fruits of preaching are better.'[1]

In short, Dante must begin the contemplative life at a much humbler point—not with the high mysteries of Revelation, but with the history of the Church, and, in particular, its relation to the Empire. This is the one great lesson of the Earthly Paradise, for the simple reason that, in the poet's view, no such Paradise was possible until the temporal and spiritual powers assumed their Divinely ordained attitude to each other. He now proceeds to show what that attitude is, and the ruin to both Church and Empire which followed their departure from it. When he regained his sight, which he had been forced to turn away from 'the greater object of sense,' the mystery of Revelation, he found that 'the lesser object,' the Procession, was in the act of wheeling to the right in order to return to the sacred East from which it came. Dante compares it to an army turning 'under its shields to save itself,' which is probably his symbolic way of saying that the only safety for the Church Militant is by a return to its Divine original, God's first intention in the Garden of Eden. The whole movement is carried out with a Divine ease and order. When the entire vanguard had wheeled, the Gryphon moved the Chariot without fluttering a feather, evidently to indicate the way in which Christ guides His Church without confusion, so long as it follows Him. The Seven Virtues returned to their places beside the wheels, Matelda, Statius and Dante, in company with Faith, Hope and Love, following the right-hand wheel, 'which made its orbit with the lesser arc.' And thus, marching to angelic music, they passed through 'the high forest,' which the sin of Eve had emptied of inhabitants. Everything implies that it is a Divinely ordered retreat: the movement to the right, the light of sun and candlestick

[1] *Cantica Canticorum*, Sermons ix. and xxxviii.

upon their faces, the ease with which the Gryphon moves His 'holy burden,' the heavenly melody which regulates their steps.[1]

Before we enter upon the great historical drama which is about to be unfolded to Dante's eyes, it may be well to see clearly its general conception. Dante's aim is to draw a terrible parallel between the first Fall and a second and worse. The first is that of the natural man, the second of the natural and spiritual together—Church and Empire. Dante sees the Tree which represents the Empire 'twice despoiled,' and the second time the fallen Church is torn away from it and carried into captivity. Church and Empire have repeated in a more disastrous way the sin of Adam, and undone Christ's own efforts to restore the lost Paradise to the fallen race.

The drama begins by the arrival of the Procession at the foot of a great Tree at which Beatrice alights:

> Perhaps in three flights an arrow loosened
> From the string takes as much space, as we
> Had moved away when Beatrice descended.
> I heard them murmur all together 'Adam!'
> Then circled they about a plant despoiled
> Of flowers and other leafage on each branch.
> Its head of boughs, which widens out the more
> The higher up it is, had been by the Indians
> Among their forests marvelled at for height.[2]

The three arrow-flights are almost invariably passed over in silence by commentators, or regarded as an instance of Dante's well-known love of mathematical accuracy. It is impossible to believe that he had not some much more definite meaning. The passage on which we are entering is, as we shall see, based on a chronological order, and it seems natural to suppose that the chronology begins here. If the ten steps of

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 13-33. Professor Earle offers, as he says, 'a very different explanation. Not a feather of the Griphon stirs, because he has no sympathy with the new departure, he complies mechanically, but exhibits no emotion of interest in a movement which is directed towards the Tree of Knowledge. Or, more generally, it may be taken to indicate blank simplicity and passive obedience' (*Introduction*, cii). It is really difficult to take such interpretations seriously.

[2] *Purg.* xxxii. 34-42. The word '*coma*' in l. 40 indicates the appearance of the bare boughs at the top, like a 'head of hair.'

Beatrice in xxxiii. 17 mean, as I believe, ten years, arrow-flights may be taken as longer periods of time. There is a strong temptation to regard them as centuries, for about three hundred years from the Crucifixion would bring us to the conversion of Constantine in 312, and the union of the Church with the Empire, symbolized by the Gryphon attaching the pole of the Chariot to the Tree (ll. 49-51). This, however, seems forbidden by the chronology of the passage. The first disaster to the Church *after* it is thus attached, is persecution by the Empire;[1] and as this took place *before* Constantine, we are reluctantly forced to give up this interpretation. What other to suggest, it is not easy to say. Yet there is one view which seems possible, and would avoid this chronological difficulty. Assume that an arrow-flight is a decade, and three of them from the death of Christ bring us down to about the time of the martyrdom of St. Peter, traditionally placed in A.D. 68, the last year of Nero's reign. It was and is the belief of the Roman Catholic Church that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, his term of office lasting twenty-five years, a belief in which Dante undoubtedly shared.[2] It certainly seems improbable that, in a great review of the relation of the Church to the Roman Empire, a good Catholic would leave Peter's episcopate at Rome entirely unrecognized. If Peter himself is not directly named, the reason is that Dante regarded the Church of the Apostolic days as being still under the immediate guidance of Christ. It would fit in with the chronology of the passage if we take the 'perhaps three flights of an arrow' as about three decades, carrying us on to Peter's martyrdom, and suppose that Dante regarded this as the date of the union of Church and Empire, not the legal union, as under Constantine, but the ideal spiritual union under Christ Himself.[3]

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 109-117. See p. 475.

[2] Toynbee (*Dante Dictionary*, Art. 'Pietro 1') quotes a passage from Brunetto Latini as representing the traditions on the subject in Dante's time. The length of Peter's episcopate is given to a day: twenty-five years, seven months, seven days.

[3] Landino takes the three arrow-flights to represent the Trinity, but there is nothing in the passage to justify this.

The 'plant' at the foot of which Beatrice descends is, literally, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the midst of the Garden, and, allegorically the Empire. This symbolic sense is not so far-fetched as, perhaps, it seems. The Empires of Assyria and Babylon are represented in Scripture under the form of trees whose towering height was the symbol of their world-wide greatness.[1] It was a figure, therefore, which lay ready to his hand, and the fourfold sense of Scripture made it easy to read many meanings into it. One of these senses Dante expressly singles out in the next Canto where Beatrice tells him that the interdict placed by God upon the Tree signifies *morally* His justice.[2] 'This means,' as Döllinger says, 'that the prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge was the beginning of law and ordinance, and of the corresponding duty of obedience. This was the foundation, in principle, of the highest earthly power, the empire, as the source of legislation and the protector of right. The tree is thus made a symbol of the imperial rule of the Roman Empire.'[3] It is because it thus stands for law and justice, lifting itself up as a great protecting power in the midst of the earth, that Beatrice descends at the foot of it, thus placing herself under the shelter of the Empire as the natural defender of the Church. It is for the same reason that the branches, like those of its offshoot on the Terrace of Gluttony, expand as they go upward, like an inverted pine, 'that no one might ascend.' Imperial justice is too Divine a thing to be at the mercy of every hand that cares to pluck it for its own selfish ends.

Nevertheless, lofty as it is, its boughs are utterly bare of flower and leaf: Adam's sin has done more than pluck an apple, it has so withered the whole tree that it is powerless to bear even the leaves of justice 'for the healing of the nations.' It is not by accident that it is Adam's name which is murmured by the whole

[1] Ezek. xxxi.; Dan. iv. [2] *Purg.* xxxiii. 70-72.
[3] *Studies in European History* (translated by Elizabeth Warre), 'Dante as a Prophet,' pp. 89, 90.

company, and not Eve's. According to the doctrine of the Church, Adam alone was the head and representative of mankind. Aquinas says expressly that if Eve had sinned, while Adam remained unfallen, the taint of original sin would not have passed down to their posterity. Adam's name, therefore, is here murmured as the source of universal sin, the destroyer of that original righteousness without which the tree of imperial government cannot bear its natural fruit of law, order and peace.[1]

We come now to the Divine, ideal union of Church and Empire. First of all, the whole company of Prophets, Apostles, and Virtues proclaim aloud the blessedness of the Gryphon in that he refrained from rending the Tree with His beak, in other words, from seizing the possessions, or trespassing upon the jurisdiction, of the imperial power. The reference is to Christ's invariable submission to the Roman Empire during His earthly life: His birth under it, His enrolment as a subject, His refusal of the kingdoms of this world and their glory, His command to 'render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,' and His acceptance of the sentence of death from Pilate, the representative of the Empire, whose power was 'given him from above.'[2] The reply of the Gryphon,

> 'Thus is preserved the seed of all the just,'[3]

or 'of all justice,' seems to me to be generally somewhat misunderstood. To connect it with Christ's reply to the Baptist: 'Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness' (Vulgate, 'justice'),[4] throws little light on it, since John was in no sense a representative of the Empire, and the baptism of Jesus was not an act of submission to its authority. The meaning must be sought in the right interpretation of the word 'Thus.' It is assumed that

[1] *Summa*, i-ii. q. lxxxi. a. 5. Comp. Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 21.

[2] *De Mon.* ii. 12, 13; iii. 15. Professor Earle, taking the Gryphon to represent the unlearned laity, regards his abstention from plucking of the Tree as the wise refraining of uneducated people from knowledge which is too high for them.

[3] *Purg.* xxxii. 48.

[4] Matt. iii. 15.

this refers solely to the Gryphon's abstention from the rending of the Tree: in other words, that justice is preserved only when the Church refrains from usurping the prerogatives of the Empire. Doubtless this is part of the meaning, but only part. The 'thus' refers chiefly to the action of the Gryphon which immediately follows. 'The animal of two natures' joins together 'the two governments':

> And turning to the pole which he had drawn,
> He drew it to the foot of the widowed bough,
> And what was of it to it he left bound.[1]

'*Thus* is preserved the seed of all justice.' 'The seed of all justice' is the Tree of the Empire; and it is preserved only by a Divinely-accomplished union with the ideal Church, which causes the Tree to break forth into bloom.

The last-quoted line has a very peculiar significance. In its literal sense, it means that the pole of the Chariot was made of the wood of the Tree, and that therefore the pole was the Cross. There can be little doubt that the reference is to the well-known legend that the Cross was an offshoot of the forbidden Tree. The story has many forms, but this is the substance of it as given in *The Golden Legend.* When Adam neared the end of life he sent Seth to the Angel at the gate of Paradise to beg for 'the oil of mercy.' The answer was that this could not be given till five thousand five hundred years had passed; but he gave him a branch of the forbidden Tree, with the assurance that when it bore fruit, his father would be whole. Seth planted it on his grave; and when the Queen of Sheba on her way to visit Solomon saw it, 'she worshipped this tree, because she said the Saviour of all the world should be hanged thereon, by whom the realm of the Jews shall be defaced and cease.' To frustrate this doom, Solomon

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 49-51. I see no reason for departing from the common view of '*binato*' in l. 47 as indicating the 'two natures' of Christ. Professor Earle takes it as 'twice-born,' and connects it with the evangelical doctrine of the New Birth. Some of the older commentators says that Christ was 'twice-born'—from eternity and at the Incarnation.

had it buried in the earth; but afterwards the pool of Bethesda being formed on the very spot, the wood floated and was used to make the Cross on which Jesus was nailed. Thus 'the cross by which we be saved, came of the tree by which we were damned.'[1] Now, into this legend Dante read a curious *moral* sense. The Tree, as we have seen, represents the justice of God; and, since the Cross is made of the Tree, it also represents justice. In the Sixth Canto of the *Paradiso*, the Emperor Justinian says all the great achievements of the Roman Eagle grow dim before that which it accomplished under Tiberius, namely, the Crucifixion of Christ. This is its crowning glory, because it is God's 'vengeance for His wrath,' the supreme act of His justice. The justice of the Empire, and the justice of God in the Cross, are therefore one and the same; and this appears to be what was in Dante's mind when he says that the pole of the Chariot was made of the wood of the Tree. The Church is drawn by the same justice of which the Empire is the symbol.[2]

The first result of this return of the Divine justice of the Cross to the Empire is that the Tree immediately burst forth into bloom. The general meaning is obvious, but the colour or colours of the flowers have never been very satisfactorily explained,

> Less than of roses and more than of violets.[3]

Ruskin declares that it 'would not be possible, in words, to come nearer to the *definition* of the exact hue which Dante meant—that of the apple-blossom.'[4] It may be that one is afflicted with the colour-blindness which he attributes to the Greeks, but I confess that the words do not suggest apple-blossom to my mind. They remind me much more of passion-flower—a light flush of rose at the edge deepening into purple towards the centre of the cup. We may surely set aside the common interpretation that the flowers represent the blood of the

[1] Caxton's translation of *The Golden Legend*, 'The Invention of the Holy Cross.'
[2] Comp. *De Mon.* ii. 13.
[3] *Purg.* xxxii. 58.
[4] *Modern Painters*, III. Pt. iv. ch. xiv. § 46.

martyrs: whatever the colour is, it is *not* that of blood, nor is the putting of Christians to death the proper blossom of an Empire renewed by the Cross. Why should we not interpret according to the symbolism of colour which pervades the whole allegory? 'More than of violets' may surely be taken for the purple in which the four Cardinal Virtues are clad—the virtues without which no righteous government is possible; and 'less than of roses' certainly reminds us of the roses with which the New Testament writers are crowned, as if to indicate that the government of the Empire cannot be carried on without Love, although in secular affairs it may not burn, as it did upon their brows, like flame. In short, the Church of Apostolic days so revived the dead Empire that it put forth as its natural flowers the blossoms of Love and the Cardinal Virtues.[1]

In the passage which follows Dante draws a contrast between the glorious triumphal Procession of Apostolic days when the Church was guided by Christ Himself, and the times of humility and poverty which immediately succeeded. The heavenly and ideal relation between Church and Empire which the Gryphon had just established, was accompanied by a hymn beyond Dante's understanding: it represents the harmony between the two governments, a harmony which had long passed away from the earth. So sweet was the melody that it overcame him with sleep, from which he was roused by a bright light and a call: 'Arise, what doest thou?' It is Matelda bending over him, to summon him back to the realities of the active life. Dante compares it to the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, John and James had one short glimpse of 'some flowerets of the Apple-tree,' the glori-

[1] On the ecclesiastical side violet represents penitence and sadness. It was sometimes used as the liturgical colour for Epiphany in allusion to Isaiah's words regarding the Gentiles: 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light' (ix. 2)—the violet representing darkness. If we could suppose that Dante was thinking of this, the 'more than of violet' might be taken as symbolic of the conversion of the Gentile world by the Cross united to the Tree. See Hulme's *Symbolism in Christian Art*, p. 27.

fied body of Jesus;[1] and when recalled by their Master's voice from the sleep into which it threw them, they found His raiment changed and Moses and Elias gone. So was it with himself. The heavenly glory had vanished, and he was left face to face with the early Church in its loneliness and poverty. His first alarmed cry is, 'Where is Beatrice?'—for, like many another, Dante feared that Wisdom and Virtue had left the earth with the first generation of Christians. Matelda, the Active Life, gives him the assurance that they are still here, pointing out where Beatrice as the guardian of the Chariot sat alone on the bare ground, encircled by the seven nymphs with the lamps of their virtues in their hands, which neither north wind nor south could extinguish. It is a picture of the simplicity and unworldliness of the early Papacy—the absence of all reliance upon earthly power or pomp or wealth. Beatrice is seated on the root of the Tree and under its new foliage, that is, under the protection of the Roman Empire. She 'sits alone; she has no other court than the seven Virtues. She sits on *la terra vera*; she has no other throne than the bare earth, thereby imitating Him who had not where to lay His head. Beatrice symbolizes the spiritual authority, the ideal Papacy of Dante's aspirations. The Bishops of the Primitive Church sat alone in the Imperial City, without any retinue of cardinals, courtiers, or servants. They were poor; the papal throne had not as yet been set up; the temporal wealth of the Church had not yet been amassed; they assembled their flocks in the Catacombs; therefore they sat upon the bare earth. In describing Beatrice as alone, and sitting on the bare earth, Dante portrays the humility and poverty of the primitive Vicars of Christ, and satirizes the splendour and pomp of the later Popes, besides those of his own time.'[2]

Then comes what has been well named Dante's call

[1] According to the mystical interpretation of Canticles ii. 3, 'the Apple-tree' is Christ, and 'the flowerets' are the glimpses which the three Apostles saw of the transfiguration of His body on the Mount—the visible blossoming of the hidden life and glory.

[2] Vernon's *Readings*, ii. 608 (2nd Edition).

to the prophetic office. Beatrice is about to show him in a series of symbolic visions the successive calamities which befell both Church and Empire down to the year 1305; and she commands him to note them well, that he may carry back the message to the sinful world. Most of the calamities have their origin in some wrong relation between 'the two governments.'

> 'Here shalt thou be short time a forest-dweller,
> And thou shalt be with me for evermore
> A citizen of that Rome whereof Christ is Roman.
> Wherefore, for profit of the world that liveth ill,
> Upon the car hold now thine eyes, and what thou seest,
> When thou hast returned yonder, see that thou write.'[1]

There is much dispute over the exact meaning of the word 'here'—whether it refers to the Earthly Paradise or to the earthly life. We shall get at the idea best by noting carefully the contrast which Dante obviously means to draw between 'a forest-dweller' (*silvano*) and 'a citizen' (*cive*). The forest where he now is, and in particular the Tree, is the symbol of the Empire; and even at its best it is but a symbol, and not the true eternal city. Therefore even the citizen of the ideal Empire as it has just been revived by the Cross, is only as a dweller in the forest compared with the celestial Rome, of which Christ Himself is a Roman citizen. Dante, in short, when he heard the hymn of the union of Church and Empire, was tempted to think that here at last was the very city of God—the final and perfect form of society; and Beatrice tells him that even this is but a rude uncivilized forest-life in comparison with the great citizenship of the celestial Rome which he will yet share with Christ and herself. Meantime, in the light of this symbol he will see in a series of visions the successive departures of the Church and Empire even from this earthly ideal; and this great decline and fall of Rome he is to proclaim 'yonder,' that the world may turn from the evil life which bears such fruit.

The history of Church and Empire, especially in their relations to each other, is now presented in seven

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 100-105.

tableaux, which carry it down to Dante's day.[1] The order is chronological, and each vision seems to refer to some definite historical situation or event.

1. The first vision is as follows:

> Never descended with so swift a motion
> Fire from a thick cloud, when it is raining
> From out that region which is most remote,
> As I beheld the bird of Jove swoop down
> Through the tree, rending away of the bark,
> As well as of the flowers and the new leaves;
> And he the chariot smote with all his might,
> Whereat it reeled like a ship in tempest,
> Tossed by the waves, now starboard and now larboard.[2]

There is general agreement that this represents the persecution of the Church by the early Roman Emperors, Nero, Domitian, and others. 'The bird of Jove' is the Eagle, the standard of that Empire under which Christ had placed His Church for protection; and, so far from fulfilling His intention, it swoops down upon it like a bird of prey. In doing so, the Empire injured itself as much as the Church, despoiling itself of bark, flowers and leaves, the very citizens whose Christian virtues were its strength and beauty.

2. The second attack comes from a different quarter:

> Then saw I fling himself into the cradle
> Of the triumphal vehicle a fox,
> Which from all good food seemed to keep a fast.
> But, rebuking it for its shameful sins,
> My Lady turned it to as swift a flight
> As such a fleshless skeleton could bear.[3]

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[1] No one can write on this subject without being deeply influenced by Dr. Moore's quite masterly essays on 'Symbolism and Prophecy in *Purg.* xxviii.-xxxiii.' in his Third Series of *Studies in Dante*, and I desire to acknowledge gratefully my indebtedness all through the present exposition of these closing Cantos.

[2] *Purg.* xxxii. 109-117. Dante probably had in mind the parable of the eagle and the cedar in Ezek. xvii. 3, 4. The Roman Eagle is called 'the bird of *Jove*' to indicate that the Empire was still heathen: the struggle of Christianity was with Paganism. When Paganism was conquered and the Empire proclaimed Christian under Constantine, the Eagle is called 'the bird of *God*' (*Par.* vi. 4). It is often in such slight hints as these that the finer shades of Dante's meaning must be looked for.

[3] *Purg.* xxxii. 118-123. Note the intentional contrast between 'the triumphal vehicle' and the fox—the glorious Chariot of the Church on which Beatrice had descended like a bride, now degraded to be the den and lair of a foul and fleshless vixen.

The fox was the recognized symbol of heresy, as in Ezek. xiii. 4, 'Thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.' The particular heresy meant is matter of dispute, but Scartazzini is probably right in identifying it with Gnosticism, for the two reasons he gives. In the first place, it is a heresy which invaded the Church from the outside: as the fox 'flung himself' into the Car, so also did the Gnostic heresy which took its origin in heathen and Oriental philosophy. In the second place, the chronological order of the *tableaux* excludes all heresies later than the Donation of Constantine, which constitutes the third calamity. Were it not for this, we might identify the fox, as some do, with Arianism. The leanness of the animal is due to the fact that heretics never taste the wholesome food of true doctrine. Landino and others assume that the fox is put to flight by the summary method of fire, which leaves 'the bones without flesh'; but Dante's meaning seems to be very different. Beatrice, the Divine Wisdom, rebukes the foul sins of heretics and disproves their false doctrines, as did the early Church Fathers. There is no hint of burning. The slowness with which a heresy gives way is traced by Dante to the weakness which false teaching produces: men who have fed their souls on false doctrine which leads to false living, have thereby created in themselves a spiritual incapacity to be convinced by the truth. This seems to be what Dante means when he says that Beatrice put the fox to flight *as swiftly as its fleshless bones would allow*: it is the very weakness of heresy which renders it obstinate and impervious to the arguments of Divine Wisdom. As to the use of force, Dante seems to have taken St. Bernard's view. Commenting on Cant. ii. 15, 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines,' he says: 'The simple and natural sense is that heretics should be "taken" rather than merely driven away. They should be taken, I say, not by force of arms, but by force of arguments, by which their errors are refuted, and they themselves, if possible, brought back to the true faith, and reconciled

to the Catholic Church.' Dante, in fact, is thinking, not of the destruction of heretics by fire, but of the refutation of heresy by Divine truth—two entirely different things.

3. The third calamity comes again from the Eagle its friendship is more disastrous than its enmity:

> Then, from thence, whence he before had come,
> I saw the Eagle descend down into the ark
> Of the car, and leave it feathered from itself.
> And such as issues from a heart that mourns,
> A voice issued from heaven, and thus spoke:
> 'O my little ship, how evil art thou laden!'[1]

The voice is supposed to be that of St. Peter, who in pictures of the Ship of the Church is always represented as its pilot; and the evil freight is the Donation of Constantine. Dante, of course, did not know that the Donation was a forgery, but he denounces again and again the alleged gift of the Western Empire to the Papacy. His arguments in the *De Monarchia* (iii. 10) are the two which he here puts in symbolic form. First, the Donation is the Eagle stripping itself of *its own feathers*—the Empire alienating its own proper possessions and functions, and thereby impairing its Divinely ordained unity, which Constantine had no power to do. And second, that as he had no power to alienate any part of the ideally universal Empire, so neither had the Church any right to receive any part. In the present passage there is something ridiculous in a bird clothing a chariot with its feathers. It is precisely because it was ridiculous that Dante chose the figure. Feathers are the natural covering of the Eagle—they give it beauty and the means of flight; but they are entirely incongruous on a chariot. Just as incongruous and unnatural to Dante's mind were temporal possessions to the Church of Christ. They were expressly forbidden: 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.'[2] The only lawful possession of the

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 124-129.

[2] Matt. x. 9. For other references to the Donation, see *Inf.* xix. 115-117; *Par.* xx. 58-60; *De Mon.* ii. 12, 13; iii. 13, etc.

Church was the Patrimony of the poor, which she held merely as steward to dispense to those in need. Dante regarded Constantine's Donation as the true beginning of the ruin of the Church, and of those evil relations to the Empire which led to constant conflict.

4. There is much greater uncertainty as to the meaning of the fourth calamity:

> Then it seemed to me that the earth opened itself
> 'Twixt the two wheels, and I saw rise a dragon,
> Which upward through the car his tail did fix;
> And, like a wasp that draweth back its sting,
> Drawing to himself his tail malign,
> He drew part of the floor and went wandering, wandering.[1]

This is at least 'imitated' from the passage Rev. xii. 3-4, in which the dragon is represented as drawing down with his tail 'the third part of the stars of heaven.' As Dante, in Canto xxxiii. 34, identifies the dragon with 'the serpent,' we may take it that it represents some attack of Satan upon the Church. But since the *tableaux* are historical, we must look for some special agent of Satan; and the majority of commentators find him in the False Prophet, Mohammed. The schism which the dragon made in the Chariot renders this extremely probable. The mediæval view of Mohammed was not that he was the founder of a new religion: he was one of the worst of heretics, the creator of a vast schism in the Christian Church. 'Springing out of the same Oriental soil and climate, if not out of the bosom of the Oriental Church itself, in

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 130-135. I cannot say, of course, that I am satisfied with 'wandering, wandering' for '*vago vago*' in l. 135. Butler translates 'went his way rambling about,' which has a somewhat undignified sound. Whatever may be the best translation, may not the reference be to the way in which the schism spread hither and thither through the Christian world? 'The Saracens and their successors in Moslem sovereignty had overrun and conquered many lands which had formerly been inhabited by a Christian population and governed by Christian rulers. Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, and North Africa westwards to the Straits of Gibraltar, had once been Christian, and had been lost to Christendom during the seventh and eighth centuries' (Principal Lindsay's *History of the Reformation*, i. 18). The list of countries shows us the extent of the schism; and also it may explain why Dante says it was the *floor* of the Chariot that was rent—that part of the world in which Christianity first took root, the foundation and floor on which it stood.

part under its influence, in part by way of reaction against it, Mahometanism must be regarded as an eccentric heretical form of Eastern Christianity. This, in fact, is the ancient mode of regarding Mahomet. He was considered, not in the light of the founder of a new religion, but rather as one of the chief heresiarchs of the Church';[1] and as such Dante gives him the place of honour in the Bolgia of the Schismatics.[2] If we could regard the two wheels of the Car as the Old and New Testaments, it would give meaning to the rising of the dragon between the two, Mohammedanism being an attempt to unite Jewish and Christian elements on a basis of strict monotheism.

It is quite possible that Dante included the great Iconoclastic schism which rent East and West, as an offshoot of the Mohammedan one. The head of it, Leo the Isaurian, was popularly regarded as having been instigated by Mohammedans in his crusade against images. 'His adviser,' says Milman, 'was said to be a certain Besor, a Syrian renegade from Christianity, deeply imbued with Mohammedan antipathies.'[3] It is not unlikely, therefore, that Dante regarded the Iconoclastic schism as substantially a continuation and development of that of Mohammed.

5. The fifth calamity brings us again to the incongruity of covering the Chariot with the imperial feathers:

> That which remained behind—even as with grass
> A fertile land—with the feathers, offered
> Perchance with sound intention and benign,
> Itself re-covered, and with them were re-covered
> The two wheels and the pole, in so short time,
> A sigh doth longer keep the lips apart.[4]

This is generally understood as referring to the Donations of Pepin (A.D. 755) and his son Charles the Great (A.D. 775). Villani's account probably represents the common belief, in which Dante shared. Pope Stephen II.

[1] Stanley's *History of the Eastern Church*, p. 249.
[2] *Inf.* xxviii. 22-31.
[3] *Latin Christianity*, Bk. iv. chap. vii.
[4] *Purg.* xxxii. 136-140.

summoned Pepin to his aid against Astolf, King of the Lombards; and 'in the end, by force of arms and of his folk, the said Telofre [Astolf] was overcome and defeated by the good King Pepin, and he obeyed the command of the Pope and of Holy Church, and made all amends, just as he and his cardinals chose to devise; and he left to the Church by compact and privilege the realm of Apulia and Sicily, and the patrimony of St. Peter.' Twenty years after, Charles 'confirmed the donation which Pepin, his father, had given to her, and beyond that he endowed the Church with the duchy of Spoleto and of Benevento.'[1] Dante does not deny the existence of a good intention in these gifts; none the less he saw in them the beginning of that complete transformation of the Church into a mere temporal power which, from this time forward, proceeded with extraordinary rapidity. It is to be noted also that he regarded it as the source of the two remaining calamities: in Canto xxxiii. 38, 39, he speaks of

> The eagle which left the feathers on the car,
> By which it became a monster, then a prey.

6. This connection is indicated in the opening words of the description of the sixth change:

> *Transformed thus*, the holy edifice,
> Sent forth heads throughout its parts,
> Three above the pole, and one in every corner.
> The first were horned like oxen; but the four
> One single horn had upon the forehead;
> Like monster never yet was seen.[2]

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that the seven heads are the Seven Deadly Sins—'capital' sins which sprang up out of the sudden aggrandisement of the Church, in contrast to the Seven Virtues which attended her in the days of her poverty. The three on the pole would then be Pride, Envy, and Anger—two-horned sins because they offend against both God and our neighbour; and those at the corners, the remaining

[1] *Chronicle*, ii. 12, 13. These Donations were much more genuine than that attributed to Constantine. See Gregorovius, *Hist. of Rome in the Middle Ages*, ii. 286, 379.

[2] *Purg.* xxxii. 141-147.

four, with one horn because they sin against our neighbour only. The difficulty of this view is that it does not, like all the other *tableaux*, represent any definite historical event, but only a general moral deterioration. This would be avoided by adopting the very ingenious view suggested by Butler and accepted by Dr. Moore, namely, that the seven heads 'denote the seven electors, three of whom were mitred—the Archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Cöln—and four temporal princes. It must be remembered that these were originally appointed (circa A.D. 1000) by the Pope, and hence they are appropriately made to spring from the Church.'[1] In three points this would certainly fit in with the passage. (1) The three prelates are appropriately set on the pole of the Chariot, which is the Cross. (2) In the *De Monarchia* (iii. 16) Dante expressly denies the right of the so-called electors to choose the Emperor, since God is the only elector and the one source of his authority. And (3), in the same passage he declares that the electors disagree from time to time, 'because either all or some of them are clouded by *the mists of greed*, and discern not the face of the divine dispensation.' It is obvious how well this carries out Dante's statement that it was the feathering of the Car which produced this monstrous outgrowth of heads—its aggrandisement with temporal possessions: the Church appointed the seven electors to prevent the Empire from becoming hereditary and thus passing out of her control; and the electors on their side not unnaturally used their power to further their own ends. Dante may well have seen in all this a monstrous perversion of the relation between Church and State.[2]

[1] Butler's translation of the *Purgatorio*, Appendix B, p. 430; Moore's *Studies*, 3rd Series, pp. 206-208. Comp. Villani, iv. 3.

[2] Contrast this passage with *Inf.* xix. 109-111, where the heads and horns are said to belong to the Church in her unfallen state. Here the former are frequently interpreted as the Seven Deadly Sins, and the latter as transgressions of the Ten Commandments. Plumptre has another theory: 'At the risk of adding another conjecture to the limbo of vanities I suggest (1) that the four single-horned heads may stand for the four mendicant orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites,

7. We now reach the seventh and crowning disaster.

Secure as a fortress on a lofty mountain,
Seated upon it a dishevelled harlot
Appeared to me, with eyebrows quick around.
And, as if not to have her taken from him,
I saw at the side of her, erect, a giant,
And ever and anon they kissed each other.
But because her greedy and wandering eye
To me she turned, that savage paramour
Scourged her from the head even to the soles.
Then full of jealousy, and cruel with wrath,
He loosed the monster, and drew it through the wood
So far that of it alone he made me a shield
Unto the harlot and the new wild-beast.[1]

These lines show the final ruin of the Church in Dante's own day. The special reference is to the relations between Boniface VIII. and Philip the Fair of France. The Papacy had become an abandoned harlot, ready to sell herself, and looking round with bold eyes for the highest bidder. Philip, however, was resolved that she would be his tool, and no other's. He is represented as a Giant, because the Giants stood in mythology for the spirit of pride which seeks to shake off the authority of Heaven.[2] The embraces represent the times when each side sought to further its interest by a profession of friendship and alliance. The scourging of the harlot refers without doubt to the outrage on Boniface at Anagni, which Dante, as we saw in Canto xx. 85-90, denounces as a second crucifixion of Christ. It seems impossible to understand what is meant by the glance at Dante which drew this 'scourging' upon the Pope. It scarcely agrees with the situation to say, as many do, that Dante stands here for the typical Christian: it was certainly not for turning his attention to his flock that Philip committed his shameful

and Augustinians), which were recognised by Gregory X. in the Council of Lyons in A.D. 1272; (2) that the three with two horns may represent either the three grades of the priesthood, or more probably the three more powerful monastic orders, Benedictines, Carthusians, and Cistercians. All these from Dante's standpoint (*Par.* xi. 124-139, xxi. 129-142, xxii. 74-84), were corrupted by their wealth.'

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 148-160.

[2] *Inf.* xxxi. They are set round Cocytus as if to guard the palace of 'the Emperor' of Hell, Lucifer, who fell through pride.

assault on Boniface. The 'greedy and wandering eye' which the harlot cast at Dante shows that the motive of Boniface was simply to shake off his present ally by securing another and a more powerful. There can be little doubt that this new ally was the Emperor Albert, whose aid he sought against his French tyrant. Whether, as Plumptre thinks, Dante magnified his own share in bringing about the new movement, or whether the new movement seemed a turning of the Papacy to himself as representing the Italian people or the Ghibelline party, it is impossible to say. Whatever the cause, Philip, resolved to make sure that the Papacy would remain his tool and instrument, unloosed the Car from the Tree, and dragged it away until the wood hid it from Dante's eyes. In other words, he separated the Church from the Empire under whose shelter Christ had placed it, and carried it off into its Babylonish captivity in Avignon, where, under Clement V., it made itself the mere slave of Philip's evil and overbearing will. Dante regarded this as the destruction of the Church for the time being: it 'was, and is not.' As Vernon says, the allegory is constructed so as to bring out the exact reversal, point by point, of everything the pure primeval Church had been:

'The Monster is the antitype of the Triumphal Chariot.

'The Seven Heads form the antitype of the Seven Nymphs or the Seven Candlesticks. The Ten Horns are the antitype of the Ten Paces.

'The harlot is the antitype of Beatrice.

'The Monster being loosed from the Tree, and dragged through the forest, is the antitype of the Chariot being led to the Tree and bound to it.

'The Giant, as Paramour of the Church, is the antitype of the Gryphon, who, as the symbol of Christ, is the Bridegroom.

'In the Gospel History, Pontius Pilate is taken as an antitype of Christ. But in *Purg.* xx. 91, Dante calls Philippe le Bel "*il nuovo Pilato.*"'[1]

[1] *Readings in the Purgatorio*, ii. 624 (2nd ed.).

To this list of antitheses may be added the brazen pride with which the harlot seated herself in the feathered Chariot 'secure as a fortress on a lofty mountain,' in contrast to the humility of Beatrice in descending from it and seating herself upon 'the bare ground.' It is a strange misunderstanding which finds in this security the promise that no matter how corrupt the Church may be, the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. In reality it is that false security which says: 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' at the very moment when the Judge stands at the door and knocks.[1]

[1] Rev. iii. 17, 20.

CHAPTER XXIX

The New Life of Dante

We have now reached the closing Canto, and before entering on its exposition in detail, it may be well to have clearly before us the stage which it represents in Dante's spiritual experience. His entire faith in the Church as an ecclesiastical organization had crumbled into ruins. The glorious triumphal Chariot had passed out of existence—it 'was, and is not.' He regarded Boniface VIII. as a mere usurper. In the *Paradiso*, St. Peter bewails bitterly that his place is 'vacant in the presence of the Son of God,' and at the word all Heaven flushed red with shame and indignation.[1] It was under Boniface that the Papacy was transformed into 'a dishevelled harlot'; and when Philip the Fair dragged her and her monstrous throne away to Avignon, it meant for Dante the annihilation for the time of the Church as an institution.

A corresponding ruin fell on his political faith, for the two rose or sank together. The imperial throne was also vacant: he refused to acknowledge Rudolph, Adolph, and Albert, declaring that Frederick II. was 'the last Emperor of the Romans.'[2] The temporal power was represented by a lawless Giant who tore the Chariot from the Tree, and thus despoiled the Empire.

A man might be forgiven if, when all he holds most sacred sinks thus in ruin around him, he were to fling off all faith, and become a mere scoffer and outlaw. With Dante it produced exactly the opposite effect. The loss of the forms of faith only threw him back more vitally upon the spirit of faith. The actual

[1] *Par.* xxvii. 19-36.

[2] *Conv.* iv. 3; *Par.* iii. 118-120.

Church had perished in corruption, but the ideal Church and the Seven Virtues could no more perish than God Himself. The imperial eagle would not remain for ever without an heir. This, then, is the stage of spiritual life Dante has reached. During the years to which this Canto refers he was reconstructing his entire theory of Church and Empire, creating a new ideal of their relations out of the wreck and ruin into which they had fallen around him. Beatrice, the spirit of Revelation apart from ecclesiastical forms, impresses the new conception on him like a seal on wax—a conception a whole heaven above that of the 'school' which he had hitherto followed.

The three nymphs and the four—the Theological Virtues and the Cardinal — sing antiphonally the seventy-ninth Psalm, in lamentation for the Babylonish captivity of the Church: '*Deus, venerunt gentes*'—'O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.' Beatrice listens to the sad chant almost as changed as was Mary at the foot of the Cross, for the outrage on the Church is little short of 'crucifying the Son of God afresh.'[1] When the lament was ended, she rose erect and, glowing like fire, answered it with our Lord's words about His own departure and return: '*Modicum, et non videbitis me, et iterum modicum, et vos videbitis me*,'—'A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.'[2] Dante has not the slightest tremor of despair: the hour and power of darkness must pass, and Christ return in triumph. Well does he deserve the praise of Beatrice:

> 'The Church militant hath not any son
> With greater hope.'[3]

A new Procession is formed which preserves the general order of the first, though shorn of the ancient glory. Beatrice sets the Seven Virtues in front, their lamps taking the place of the seven candlesticks. She herself fills the position occupied by the Chariot; while, with

[1] Heb. vi. 6. [2] John xvi. 16. [3] *Par.* xxv. 52, 53.

a mere nod, she formed Dante, Matelda, and Statius into the rearguard, corresponding to the New Testament writers. It represents the ideal Church as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, an exile and wanderer, like Dante himself. Scarcely had Beatrice set her tenth step to the ground when her eyes smote his, and she asked him to advance to her side that he might hear her better. She then rebuked him gently for his slowness in questioning her, and gave him a great prophetic message which she commanded him to proclaim plainly and fearlessly to the world:

> 'From fear and from shamefastness
> I will that thou henceforward strip thyself,
> So that thou speak no more as one who dreams.
> Know that the vessel which the serpent broke,
> Was, and is not; but let him whose blame it is
> Believe that God's vengeance fears no sop.
> Not for all time shall be without an heir
> The eagle that left his feathers on the car,
> Whereby it became a monster, then a prey.
> For I see certainly, and hence narrate it,
> Stars already near to give to us a time,
> Secure from all assault and every bar,
> In the which a Five-hundred Ten and Five,
> Sent by God, shall put to death the thief,
> With that same giant who is sinning with her.'[1]

This passage has become encrusted with as much controversy as that of the famous *Veltro* in *Inf.* i. 100-111, and one cannot hope for any final, indisputable solution of the mystery. The general idea is plain enough —the inevitableness of God's judgment on the false Church and its destroyer. 'God's vengeance fears no sop' is generally explained as a reference to an ancient superstition, that a murderer would escape vengeance if within nine days he managed to eat a sop upon his victim's grave.[2] There may be, as some think, an allusion to the sacrifice of the Mass: Philip may partake of the Sacrament above the grave of the Church which he has slain, but it will not screen him from

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 31-45.

[2] There is a story that Charles of Anjou and his barons after the execution of Conradin, the last of the Hohenstaufens, ate sops over the dead body in order to protect themselves from vengeance. Perhaps Dante knew of a similar observance on the part of Philip the Fair.

the just vengeance of God. The uncertainty gathers round the question of the instrument of this vengeance. Imitating Rev. xiii. 18, Dante conceals his identity under the dark cryptogram—'a Five-hundred, Ten, and Five,' or, in Roman numerals, DXV. This is generally transposed into DVX, to indicate the coming of some great Leader for the reformation of Church and Empire. The discussion of his identity must be governed by the statement in vv. 37-39 that he is the Eagle's heir, in other words, an Emperor. This at once rules out several conjectures, such as a Pope (*Domini Xristi Vicarius*); Christ Himself (*Dominus Xristus Victor* or *Vltor*); the poet himself (*Dante Xristi Vertagus*—Greyhound); and Can Grande della Scala of Verona, who is generally identified with the *Veltro* of the First Canto of the *Inferno*. The question is therefore narrowed down to two Emperors, Henry VII. of Luxemburg (1308-1313) and Lewis IV. of Bavaria (1314-1347). The claims of the latter rest solely upon the question of dates. The almost ten steps of Beatrice (vv. 16, 17) undoubtedly represent years; and if we count them from 1305, the date of the carrying away of the Church to Avignon, it brings us down to about 1314, the year of the election of Lewis. Butler reaches the same result by another process. 'A consideration of dates may make the matter simpler, if we observe further the connection between the mystic number and "the eagle who left his feathers to the car." "In the autumn of 799," says Mr. Bryce, "Charles descended from the Alps once more, while Leo revolved deeply the great scheme for whose accomplishment the time was now ripe"—that is, the revival of the Western Empire in Charles's person. Five hundred and fifteen years from this entry of the first Teutonic Cæsar brings us to 1314, in which year Lewis of Bavaria was elected emperor. Under him, and several great partisan leaders, Matthew Visconti, Can Grande of Verona, Castruccio Castrocane, Uguccione della Faggiuola, the cause of the Empire began again to make head against the Papacy. The same year also saw the deaths of Philip the Fair and

Clement v., the first of the Avignon popes.'[1] Against all this, however, are the objections which Dr. Moore states clearly. Lewis was 'intellectually insignificant' and incapable of rousing this enthusiasm in Dante, who never alludes to him elsewhere; and he had absolutely nothing to do with the deaths of Clement and Philip: the former died a natural death, and the latter came to his end through a fall from his horse while hunting.[2] In short, as already said, there is nothing in favour of Lewis except a date, and even this depends on the year from which one counts. The year 1305 refers only to the last of the *tableaux* which Dante saw in vision, and it is surely more natural to take 1300, the ideal date of the poem, as the starting-point of the ten steps of Beatrice. This brings us down to 1310, when Henry of Luxemburg crossed the Alps into Italy.[3] Now, we know that Henry roused in Dante the most extravagant hopes of a new world. He calls him 'the Lamb of God,' 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah,' and urges him like another David to slay the Goliath who opposes him.[4] The case for Henry is argued carefully, and to my mind convincingly, by Dr. Moore, who is sanguine enough to hope that he has found the solution of the 515 in the numerical equivalents of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet composing *Arrigo*, one possible form of the Emperor's name, thus:

a (Aleph) =	1
r (Resh) =	200
r (Resh) =	200
i (Yod) =	10
c or k (Koph) =	100
	511

[1] Translation of *The Purgatorio*, Appendix B, p. 431.

[2] *Par.* xix. 118-120.

[3] The reference in Canto vi. 97-102 to the Emperor Albert's assassination as a warning to Henry VII.—'that thy successor may have fear thereof'—can scarcely have any other meaning than that it was written prior to Henry's coming into Italy. Albert's doom is regarded as a judgment for his neglect of Italy, and it is held up as a warning to his successor against the same sin. See p. 91.

[4] *Epistle* vii.

This lacks 4 of the 515, and the difficulty is that the *o* of *Arrico* has no numerical equivalent in Hebrew; and Dr. Moore assigns it the value of 4, because it is the fourth vowel. He thinks Dante learned this Kabbalistic method from his friend Emanuel ben Salomon of Rome, who himself wrote a vision of Hell and Heaven, and composed sonnets on the poet's death. Whether this is the true solution or not, I entirely agree with Dr. Moore that Henry VII. is by far the likeliest candidate for the honour of being the DXV. Since there is no hint of Henry's death in 1313, we may infer that the *Purgatorio* was finished prior to that date.[1]

Beatrice admits the Sphinx-like nature of her prophecy, but declares that events will solve it 'without scathe of herds or crops.'[2] These words seem to me to fix the date of the passage between 1308, when Henry was elected, and 1311, when he was forced to abandon the policy of peace with which he entered Italy. He crossed the Alps almost unarmed, with the avowed purpose of reconciling Guelph and Ghibelline by a universal clemency. The Papal Circular called upon all subjects of the Empire to rejoice in the King who 'brings them peace'; and in the first sentence of his Letter to the kings and potentates of Italy, Dante strikes what he confidently believed would be the keynote of the New Era: 'Behold, now is the acceptable time, in which the signs of consolation and peace arise.' The words, 'without scathe of herds or crops,' seem to show, therefore, that when this passage was

[1] 'The DXV. Prophecy' in the 3rd Series of *Studies in Dante.*

[2] *Purg.* xxxiii. 46-51. The Naiades (l. 49) are water-nymphs who preside over springs and fountains, but since they had nothing to do with the guessing of riddles there is little doubt that Dante followed a wrong reading of Ovid's *Metam.* vii. 759, 760, and that the true reading is Laiades, as restored by Heinsius. Laiades, son of Laius, is Œdipus, who guessed the famous riddle of the Sphinx: 'A being with four feet has two feet and three feet, and only one voice; but its feet vary, and when it has most it is weakest.' The answer is Man—crawling on all fours in infancy, walking on two feet in manhood, leaning on a staff in old age. Themis was so enraged that she sent a monster to ravage the flocks and crops of the Thebans. Beatrice says *her* riddle will be solved without any such destruction—a prophecy of the peaceful entry of Henry VII.

written war had not yet broken out, and Dante was still under the delusion that a reign of universal peace was at hand. We know how woefully the Emperor's gentle intentions broke down. 'The ideal of the Prince of Peace, which had been strained too far for the practical realities of life, was speedily shattered, and Henry VII., whose conception of his authority in Italy was no lower than that cherished by the Hohenstaufen emperors, found himself in a short time on the same path and involved in the same labyrinth as his predecessors in the empire.'[1]

In the passage which follows, Beatrice lays it as a solemn duty upon Dante to carry this news of a coming deliverer to 'those who live the life which is a race to death'; and she warns him not to conceal how he has seen the Tree twice despoiled in this Earthly Paradise —once by Adam (as the reference to him in vv. 61-63 seems to show), and the second time by Philip the Fair, when he robbed it of the Chariot, whose pole was made of its wood.[2] She impresses upon him that in the moral sense (l. 72, *moralmente*) the interdict upon the Tree represents, as we saw, the justice of God, the establishment of that reign of righteous law and order which it is the final end of the Empire to secure. The Empire, therefore, is no creature of the Papacy to go and come at its bidding. Its existence and authority are from God, 'who alone for his own use did create it holy.' Hence *whosoever* robs or rends the Tree of the Empire —whether he be Pope, Emperor or King—is guilty of 'blasphemy *of deed*' against God, inasmuch as he destroys His justice. The greatness of the penalty for

[1] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, vi. 34. See p. 91. Dr. Moore thinks the whole *Purgatorio* was written probably between 1308 and 1312. 'I am not aware of any definite allusions whatever in the *Purgatorio* to events after 1310. . . . I think it is a strong argument against supposing the *Purgatorio* to have been written after the death of Henry VII., that it contains no allusion to that crowning calamity of Dante's life in the way of "prophecy" or foreboding' (*Studies*, iii. 262 n.).

[2] Some think the first despoiling is that shown in the first of the *tableaux*; but since Dante is obviously drawing a parallel between the first Fall and a second, it is possible that the first despoiling is that of which Adam was guilty, and the second that of the *entire series* of calamities which passed in vision before Dante's eyes.

such blasphemy is seen in the first Adam and the second:

> 'For biting that, in pain and in desire
> Five thousand years and more the first soul
> Craved Him who punished in Himself the bite.'

The 'pain' refers to the 930 years of Adam's life on earth after his exile from the Garden; and the 'desire,' to the 4302 years he passed in Limbo waiting for his release by Christ. The two figures added together make 5232, the year of the world in which, according to the chronology of Eusebius, the Crucifixion took place, and therefore the 'Descent into Hell.'[1] What Beatrice wishes to impress on Dante is the heinousness of the sin of despoiling the Tree which stands for the justice of God in the midst of the earth, if we are to judge by the severity of its punishment. The first bite of its fruit is visited with more than five thousand years of exile from God; and even then Christ has to take the residue of the punishment upon Himself in the agony of the Cross. This is why the Tree is so lofty and its top inverted—to show that the Empire is inviolate, and to protect mankind from the heinous guilt of destroying the Divine justice for which it stands, and thus blaspheming God in deed.

Beatrice follows this with a second reproach of Dante, which ought not to be mixed up, as is frequently done, with her impeachment of him in Cantos xxx. and xxxi. Doubtless it is connected ethically with the general deterioration of character there indicated; nevertheless the range of the present reproach is strictly limited to this question of the relations of Church and Empire. His vain thoughts had so hardened his intellect into stone, and the pleasure of them so stained it with the dark hue of blood, that 'the light of the discourse' of Beatrice—obviously on this subject—simply dazes him. She commands him,

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 58-63. That the 'desire' refers to Limbo is proved by Adam's own words in *Par.* xxvi. 118-120:

> 'From that place, whence thy Lady sent Virgilius,
> Four thousand three hundred and two revolvings
> Of the sun did I *desire* this Assembly'—*i.e.*, of the Redeemed.

if he cannot write it down word for word, at least to carry back to earth an outline and picture of it, as the pilgrim brings home his staff wreathed with palm, in proof that he too has been in Holy Land: nowhere else than in the Earthly Paradise would grow such palm-branches of the truth. In reply Dante declares that his brain has been stamped by Beatrice as wax by a seal; but he asks why it is that her word soars so far beyond his sight that the more he strains after it the more he loses it. Her answer must be quoted:

> 'That thou mayst know,' she said, 'that school
> Which thou hast followed, and mayst see how
> Its doctrine is able to follow my discourse;
> And mayst see your way from the divine
> Distant as far as separated is from earth
> The heaven that highest hastens on—'[1]

that is, the *Primum Mobile*. This is the passage relied on by those commentators who hold that the aberrations of Dante were purely philosophical. It is assumed as if there could be no question of it, that 'the school' is Philosophy, for which he abandoned Theology or Beatrice. This, however, is to ignore the connection in which the passage occurs. The context shows quite clearly that Philosophy in general is not in question, but simply the subject which runs through these closing Cantos—namely, the relation between Church and Empire. Dante cannot understand why the doctrine of Beatrice on this subject so far transcends his vision, and is told that it is due to 'the school' he had followed. This does not necessarily mean a school of *Philosophy*. I believe that, in point of fact, it means a school of *Theology*, and no less a school than that of Aquinas himself. On this subject of the relation of the spiritual and temporal powers Dante broke completely away from his master, and asserted his own convictions in the *De Monarchia*. The doctrine of Papal supremacy, as Gregorovius says, had become canonical since the time of Gregory VII., and was very thorough-

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 64-90.

going. 'Christ had appointed Peter head of the universal Church and His vicar; had entrusted him with the power to bind and to loose, and with the spiritual and temporal jurisdiction. The popes accordingly asserted that this power had been transmitted to them; for they were the successors of Peter, consequently the vicars of Christ on earth, therefore endowed by Him with the imperium over heaven and earth, in sign of which they bore the keys. They ascribed to themselves the *Plenitudo Potestatis*, of which every earthly power was only an emanation or fief; in accordance with their theories they had authority to depose and set up kings, were the founders of the empire, bestowed the imperial crown, carried the two swords, and in short ruled with absolute power as sovereigns in both spiritual and secular affairs.'[1] This is the theory to which Aquinas in his *De Regimine Principum* gave a theological foundation; and it has only to be stated to see that it is a world away from that which Dante formulates here in symbolism, and in the *De Monarchia* in philosophical statement. Translating it into terms of his own personal experience, the meaning seems to be that up to the year 1300, the ideal date of the poem, Dante as a Guelph naturally accepted the Thomist doctrine of Papal supremacy. For a short time after his exile he joined the Ghibelline party; but becoming equally dissatisfied with their views of imperial supremacy, he formed 'a party by himself,' and wrought out his theory of the independent jurisdiction of 'the two governments.'[2] The present passage shows that in this working out Dante found his mind constantly hampered by the doctrines of 'the school which he had followed'—they had hardened and darkened his intellect. In view of all this, it is in direct defiance of the context to identify 'the school' with Philosophy in opposition to Theology.[3]

[1] *Rome in the Middle Ages*, vi. 119.

[2] *Par.* xvii. 61-69. Compare the condemnation of both parties in *Par.* vi. 97-108.

[3] This is the view adopted by Döllinger in his Essay on 'Dante as a Prophet.' The meaning of '*scuola*' in the present passage cannot be

In reply to this reproach of Beatrice, Dante declares that he has no recollection of ever being estranged from her; and she reminds him with a smile that he had drunk of Lethe that very day. The mere fact that he had forgotten implied the existence in him of something wrong, else Lethe could have had no effect on him. From this onward, she adds, her words will be as plain as his rude vision can bear.

We come now to the final purification of Dante, the revival in his memory of past good deeds by a draught of the River Eunoë. The hour is noon—the sun with greater brightness and slower step 'holds the meridian circle.' This hour is chosen because it is 'the most noble of the whole day, and the most virtuous,' the hour when Christ laid down His life upon the Cross, and, according to St. Bonaventura, when He ascended to Heaven.[1] It is part of that mystical parallelism of time by means of which Dante brings the various elements of his new spiritual life into relation with Christ. On the night of Good Friday he descended to Hell, that he might die unto sin; in the early morning of Easter Sunday, 'while it was yet dark,' he rose into newness of life; and now at the noblest hour of the day he ascends with Christ into the eternal world.[2] The draught of Eunoë is the final preparation for this ascension. The Seven Virtues in front suddenly stopped 'at the end of a pale shadow' such as the Alps cast upon their streams as they flow under green foliage and dark boughs. The paleness of the shadow seems meant as a contrast to the gloom of Lethe, which

> flows dark, dark,
> Under the shade perpetual, which never
> A ray of sun nor moon permits to pass.[3]

determined by Virgil's '*mia scuola*' in *Purg.* xxi. 33. The *word* is the same, but the *contexts* are entirely different.

[1] *Conv.* iv. 23; Bonaventura's *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, chap. xcvii.

[2] From *Par.* i. 43-45 it is thought by some that the hour of ascent to the Celestial Paradise was sunrise; but a careful attention to the tenses of the verbs, pluperfect and imperfect, respectively, will show, as Mr. Tozer points out, that two times of the day are named—*sunrise*, in order to determine the season of the year, and *mid-day*, to indicate the hour of ascent (*English Commentary*, p. 408).

[3] *Purg.* xxviii. 31-33; xxxiii. 106-114.

Eunoë, representing the memory of good deeds, flows under a pale green shadow, the colour perhaps indicative of the hope its waters inspire. Beyond 'the seven Ladies' Dante saw what seemed to him the rivers Euphrates and Tigris issuing from one fountain, and parting like unwilling friends.[1] They are in reality Lethe and Eunoë flowing from the one same fountain of the grace and mercy of God. Their unwillingness to part may indicate the difficulty of disentangling the good and the evil in memory, the tares and the wheat. When Dante begs Beatrice to say what this water is, she refers him to Matelda for the answer;[2] and Matelda being the symbol of the Active Life, the meaning obviously is that nothing blots out evil memories, or revives good ones, but good deeds. The idea comes from Aquinas. 'St. Thomas,' writes Dr. Hettinger, 'thus explains how meritorious works, which have become dead through sin, revive when grace is recovered. "Works done in charity," he says, "are not blotted out by God, but remain accepted by Him. The obstacle to their merit comes from the human agent, and when this obstacle is removed, God on His part grants whatever those works had merited." He again compares the simultaneous remission of sin, and the infusion of grace by the act of God to the rising sun, which at one and the same time chases away the darkness and illuminates the air. Thus also the same ray of grace which expels sin brings to light former merits; and Dante is theologically correct in making the two streams, Lethe and Eunoë, spring from the same mysterious source.'[3] This is the subject stated from the theological side; but from that of psychological experience it amounts to this, that if there has been anything good in our past life, it is naturally revived by repeating it in the present.

[1] Compare Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. v. Met. i.—'Tigris and Euphrates from one fountain pour themselves, and quickly with divided waters are dissevered.'

[2] It is strange that this is the only time Matelda is mentioned by name. See p. 379.

[3] *Dante's Divina Commedia*, p. 157 (English Translation). *Summa*, iii. q. lxxxix. a. 5; i-ii. q. cxiii. a. 7.

Matelda replies, as if in self-defence, that she had already explained all this, and her explanation was not one of the evil memories Lethe could have washed away. Beatrice makes excuse for Dante: 'a greater care,' perhaps, had dimmed his memory. The greater care is the sorrow into which her own accusation had plunged him, and the long meditation on Church and Empire. These had for the moment obscured the teaching of the Active Life; but it is an excusable weakness due to the struggle through which he had just passed, and therefore Beatrice, without a word of reproach, asks Matelda to perform her accustomed function by leading him to Eunoë 'to revive his fainting virtue.' Matelda at once obeys, 'as a gentle soul that maketh no excuse.' Taking Dante by the hand, she says to Statius, like the gracious lady she is, 'Come thou with him.' It is not easy to understand the place of Statius in the Earthly Paradise. Since entering it, he has never spoken a word, and it is clear that he occupies a subordinate position. Her laying hold of Dante, while she merely speaks to Statius, may imply that the latter is still hindered by the effects of the Sloth to which he had given way: the Active Life has not the same hold on him.

And then suddenly the story ends. The pages ordained for this second Cantica are full, and 'the curb of art' will not permit him to sing even in part of the sweet draught of which he could never have enough. 'The curb of art' is the so many Cantos for each Cantica, the so many lines for each Canto. 'A poet,' as one says, 'loves to bit and bridle his fancy, to tame the lovely wild thing, and teach it the manège . . . Artifice is the safety valve of the surcharged heart.'[1]

> I returned from the most holy wave
> Re-made even in fashion of new plants
> That are renewed with a new foliage,
> Pure and disposed to mount up to the stars.[2]

The repetition of the idea of renewal—'*new* plants, *renewed* with *new* foliage'—shows that Dante regarded

[1] Maurice Hewlett's *The Road in Tuscany*, i. 65.
[2] *Purg.* xxxiii. 142-145.

this as his true *Vita Nuova*. The figure which he chooses, like all his similes, has a peculiar inner appropriateness. It brings him into harmony with the life and spirit of the place. 'Here Spring is everlasting,'[1] Matelda had told him, and now he feels its power breaking through the winter of death in which his soul had lain so long. But even the sinless Garden is not his final rest: the colour of the new foliage is a prophetic hope of a still higher Paradise. It is the colour of the garments and wings of the Angels who guarded the Flowery Valley down below—

Green as the little leaflets just now born.[2]

As we have so often seen, the theological virtue of Hope means specifically the inward assurance and expectation of attaining to the final Beatific Vision in which faith is lost in sight—the direct and immediate knowledge of God without any veil of type and shadow. It is the 'new foliage' of this great Hope which breaks forth upon his soul in buds of the tender green of Spring-time which is its symbol. It could not appear earlier. Matelda must first cause him to drink of both Lethe and Eunoë. The Active Life of good works must wash away the bitter memory of sin, and revive whatever good the past contained, before Hope had life enough to put forth a bud, or render the soul 'pure and disposed to mount up to the stars.' For the stars are the bright virtues of 'the life which is life indeed.' Each division of the poem ends with the word. As an accommodation, perhaps, to Dante's weakness, the Seven Virtues had descended in a form appropriate to an Earthly Paradise:

'Here we are nymphs, and in the Heaven are stars.'

He has now attained a degree of purity which has power to lift him up to that starry clearness of virtue which constitutes the Celestial Paradise, for purity carries the soul up to God as naturally as flame rises in the air. 'From the most holy wave,' therefore, he returns to Beatrice, that by the power of 'the ancient

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 143. [2] *Purg.* viii. 28-30.

flame,' he may mount with her among the stars, and on that shining stairway of the New Life reach the Presence where all lesser lights of earth and Heaven fade and the promise is fulfilled: 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.'[1]

[1] Isaiah lx. 19.

'Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano,
E sarai meco senza fine cive
Di quella Roma onde Cristo è Romano.'
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